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⑥ NOTES ON COMBAT IN INDO-CHINA.

by

Instruction Bureau of Commander-in-Chief
Indo-China

⑪ 30 March ~~1954~~ 1954

⑫ 243p.

⑮ SD-171, ARPA Order-935

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(1) The items under this title must be supplemented by reading the illustrated brochure, "THE POST", compiled by the F.I.S.V., to be published shortly by the F.A.V.N. in bilingual version.

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SECRET

COMMAND IN CHIEF
IN INDOCHINA

E.M.I.F.T.

INSTRUCTION BUREAU

N O T E S
ON THE FIGHTING
IN INDOCHINA

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It would be impossible to codify a combat doctrine for small units in the theatre of operations of Indochina and to state it in a document having the appearance of regulations, because:

- the nature of the terrain, the ordinary action of the Viet Minh, and the means put at the disposal of friendly troops, vary considerably in accordance to the regions. Such variations occur within a same territory and the rule which is valid in one particular area loses much of its value in another, or even becomes unadvisable.

- the methods of action must be developed in accordance with the modifications of the Viet Minh potential and of our own potential; although such prescription fully justified in 1950 or in 1951, it is not so anymore in 1954.

That's why we have thought preferable to gather within a same brochure recent information, even if fragmentary, in which the heads of the different units may found the instruction applying to their particular situation.

The diversity of origin of these documents and the variety of experience which they reflect must incite the reader to draw from his own thinking the rules of conduct applying to his own mission.

This brochure supersedes the notes on the fight of small units (North Vietnam - December 1951 - July 1952) issued by the E.M.I.F.T., although their main passages have been retained in the re-writing deemed necessary.

A certain number of new notes have been added, some from the E.M.I.F.T., others from the F.T.N.V., as well as fragments from several studies.

Finally, a certain number of specific cases of recent experience constitute examples offered for meditation.

Saigon, March 30, 1954

General Commanding the Army corps NAVARRE
Commander in Chief in Indochina

(signed) (illegible)

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PART I

STUDIES & DOCUMENTS

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CHAPTER I

THE TERRAIN (1)

INFLUENCE OF THE TERRAIN IN THE CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS

Abstract of a lecture given by Colonel L.... at the
Tactical Formation Center for Vietnamese Officers

..... You should not be surprised if I place myself at the standpoint of the foot-soldier, because - no matter what one may have thought of it in different times - it is the infantry which, in terms of the French pre-war regulations, continues to be the main weapon to the benefit of which the other weapons are employed.

So, I want to focus your attention to a point which seems to me capital, even if some times it has been open to controversy: There is no terrain impervious to the infantry, or at least there are very few which are. A good, zealous, well instructed and well trained infantry goes through any obstacle; no forest, no swamps, no steep cliffs can stop it.

If one must advance and the will to it is unflinching, one can advance through the bamboo thickets, over the calcareous escarpments, through the mangroves. The only thing is that one does not advance everywhere in the same manner, at the same speed, or in the same formation. Progression speed and deployment possibilities are capital factors in the infantry combat, or in the combat, period; since it is around the infantry combat that that of the other forces is attuned. In other words, if the terrain is not always absolutely impervious, its very nature gives to it a coefficient of permeability which has a direct and profound influence on the character and the rhythm of the operations.

(1) The items under this title must be supplemented by reading the report "Aspects of the terrain in North Indochina", to be published shortly under the initials F.T.N.V./

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- The paddy-fields - Of course, the paddy-fields is the terrain that is going to retain our attention longer. I do not need to describe it to you. I will only insist on two facts: 1) In the difference of characteristics of the paddy-fields in the dry season and in the rainy seasons - or more exactly, between the flooded rice fields and the ones not flooded - one must make a distinction between the paddy-field covered by a thin sheet of water (or simply muddy) and that deeply flooded, transformed in a swamp or even in a lake, 2) the difference due mainly to the habitat systems, between the TONKIN and the COCHIN CHINA paddy-fields.

In the former, the population assembles together in large villages, sometime situated by the waterways, but mostly located amid the rice fields; it is these large, thickset villages surrounded of bamboo thickets and thorny fences, which constitute the strong points of the terrain; around them, the paddy-fields expand bare and open. Rivers and canals are other outstanding features of the terrain, constituting an obstacle either by the expand of water itself or the causeways that border them. But where there are no villages, the bords of these waterways are as open as the rest of the plain.

Summing up, the TONKIN delta forms an immense open plain, more or less dry or muddy, check-patterned by the waterways and their causeways, and spotted with large villages which from afar look like big patches of copse. It offers an aspect considerably analogous to that of the Annam plains, at least in the old northern provinces.

The COCHIN CHINA delta is quite different. Here there are no large villages encircled by fences or embankments, but a very dispersed habitat, extraordinarily extended in length, always practically without exception, skirting a "rach" or a canal. The houses, separated one from the other, are hidden by a dense grove of fruit trees - coconuts, bananas and others - which form both sides of the waterways a sort of long wooded corridors, about ten meters wide. Between the netting of these waterways and low vegetation, the rice fields - just like in TONKIN - are flat and bare. In a way they resemble the larger plains one finds in Transbassac, with the same poorly drained and badly cultivated spots, where only aquatic plants such as bulrush and similar grow in thick tight clumps.

What is to be the influence of these geographical characteristics?

To start with, both in TONKIN and in COCHIN CHINA, the waterways, either man-made or natural - "songs", "rachs" or canals - partition the terrain while at the same time are essential routes of communication. The terrain is partitioned and compartmented by them, and to move troops from one bank to the other - is a long and difficult operation, even having crossing crafts either native boats or Navy launches; under enemy fire, unless it

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be a sporadic harassment, it becomes more than tricky. Therefore, the support of troops by reinforcements coming from another bank can only be accomplished by a slow lateral movement from the rear; the support from a distance, i.e. from the other bank, by the weapons of flat-trajectory fire is generally impossible, particularly in TONKIN because of the embankments, and in COCHIN CHINA because of the long alleys of trees, gardens, houses or straw-huts.

Furthermore, very often it is along the waterways that the supplies are hauled and distributed, either because no road exists, because the transportation is made by fluvial means, or because if there is a road, it follows the flow of the river. For these two reasons, mainly in the delta zones, canals and rivers run generally in the direction of any possible important advance by an operational group or subordinate units, thus determining both the advance possibilities and the zones of action. It is in a parallel direction to these lines, or at least to the most important ones, that the units will advance, avoiding to attack them head-on.

In TONKIN usually a moment comes when it is necessary to abandon the waterways and move toward the villages scattered all over the plain and which, after all, are the true target. In COCHIN CHINA the essential is the mopping up of the waterway approaches, and very often a column only abandons the vicinity of a rach (brook) to move to the next one. But if the columns advance in a parallel direction to the main waterways, they cannot avoid having to cross the secondary ones, which are many and intermingled in all directions. Then, there is the question of choosing the crossing points, and this is of outmost importance; it is not the matter of finding a bridge, because they are all destroyed, or to locate a place to ford, since canals and rivers have the same even depth for very long stretches. There are, however, certain spots of the terrain where this tricky operation of crossing bodies of water becomes easier because of the possibility of fire protection, or because they lend themselves somewhat more to the use of one's spanning ability.

Therefore, the importance and the diversity of waterways partitioning the terrain is what dictates the axis of effort. These factors and the very nature of the soil are to condition the operational columns' composition, so closely related to the nature of the terrain.

As amphibious ground, the delta areas need a particular proportioning of materiel, a quite different structure of the tactical groups, from the one needed for ordinary terrain. To start with, the paddy-fields are denied to the armour which must stick to the roads; even if the ground is dry, the armored cars with caterpillar tracks cannot penetrate very far without running against impassable obstacles. Of course, at present we

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have amphibious devices, but they are for particular uses of which we shall talk later on.

In the paddy-fields, the Infantry, the only force able to go through any where, is the pivot of the maneuver; but it needs other branches for its transportation, for opening its way, for its protection and for its support. Just as with the armor, the trucks of the Artillery train are bound to the roads. To supplement the shortcomings of one branch or the other, we must resort to "marine" means, hence the importance the fluvial flotillas are acquiring.

If the contemplated operation is to develop itself far from the roads, if rotation of transportation is not possible, if it takes our elements beyond the range of our land batteries, the whole maneuver and, to start with, its importance, shall be conditioned by the marine means available and by their possibilities. From this mere standpoint, the terrain is already susceptible to limit the amplitude of an operation and to impose to it a particular rhythm. But to determine these aspects, the Infantry fire support conditions are still more imperative than the methods of transportation; here again the factor terrain comes in with a more tyrannical imposition. The Infantry must be able to have constant support of artillery; if in COCHIN CHINA, in certain areas where the Viet Minh starts to show signs of exhaustion, very cautious units can temporarily leave, for limited operations, the areas under artillery protection, it is not the same in the TONKIN delta where one risks to face forces of considerable strength or, if it is the question of attacking a village, one must necessarily open breach in its fortification.

The area of protection covered by land or eventually fluvial artillery guns, demarcates in depth the zone in which the Infantry can operate. Here again the influence of the terrain weighs heavily, since in the deltas the artillery is bound to the roads and it is not easy to find convenient zones of deployment for batteries.

Summing up, in the deltas, the waterways, rivers and canals, laterally demarcate the zones of action; the natural or artificial communication routes, establish the overall axis of the columns, while at the same time are the possible bases for fire support.

It is within this general frame that the only elements able to operate in the paddy-fields - the Infantry and the fluvial devices - will be moving. But the terrain suitable to one force is not suitable to another. The amphibious devices, remarkably maneuverable in the swamps and flooded paddy-fields, cannot operate for long time on dry ground and cannot easily cross the shelters. The normal advance ground for the Infantry, is not very passable for the amphibious devices and viceversa; the same terrain is not propitious both for crabs and alligators!

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To advance easily, the L.V.T. need a rather deep bed of water; their crossing capacity is quite limited and steep banks and embankments stop them. The crabs are better off in muddy ground and can negotiate the obstacles easier!

Crabs and L.V.Ts can some times maneuver together in the same terrain, but other times must be assigned to different missions.

In general the amphibious elements cannot be employed as support to the Infantry; their tasks shall mainly be cavalry missions, using their speed, their range of action and their power. They will be used for exploration, for surprise investments, for flank maneuvers, and for pursuit if there is a chance, making use of the terrain where the Infantry could only advance slowly and with great difficulty.

All told, of course, it is the Infantry which attacks the enemy positions, the fortified villages in TONKIN, and in COCHIN CHINA the wooded borders, storming them after having crossed the paddy-fields no matter if they are dry, muddy or flooded. The role of this Infantry is then to establish contact and then to attack by maneuvering.

Since the rice fields constitute an open plain, marching must be in a formation as much deployed as possible, this with the triple objective of combing the maximum of ground, offer the minimum target to the heavy fire of the adversary, and to allow an easy maneuvering in case of engagement. For the same reasons, it is desirable to push ahead as much as possible the reconnaissance echelon, preceded by light patrols and advanced scouts. If an open terrain requires cautious crossing, it is most convenient to cross it quickly, if no more to enhance the surprise element.

These are the commendable desiderata, but in the paddy-fields they are seldom achievable, when not self-defeating. Naturally, it is always possible to advance in a soppy or even flooded terrain, as far as the water does not reach above the shoulders! This, however, to a certain extent is an extravagant feat, which might be undertaken only by a small group and for a very short distance. Anyway, on oozy ground the progression speed is extremely low; the deployment makes the advance even more painful, the units fold into small columns, men march close together, the scouts do not venture to walk far ahead. The sections, the companies, and sometimes even the battalions have the tendency to follow the small banks; it is a tendency against which one must react, but it is not always possible. Whether one likes it or not, one must force the echelons of command to be mindful of the degree of permeability of the terrain to the march of the Infantry, and this exerts a great influence on the choice of direction. In central or western COCHIN CHINA, in the rainy season, any important column is actually confined to march on the raised strips of land bordering the waterways.

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No less advisable for the Infantry is that it should advance from strong point to strong point along the terrain; these are like mooring points where the Infantry forms up again for a new bound ahead, or where it can establish a base of fire or eventually recover in case of temporary defeat.

In the TONKIN delta, the villages or lines or villages constitute these strong points; in COCHIN CHINA, they are the confluences of the main waterways or, along these, the largest and thickest wooded areas. But even here, the terrain imposes an advance by bounds. Before choosing the objective, must be examined from a double stand point: considering the value of the intermediate objective as point of engagement, in case of respond from the enemy, and its value as jump-off point for the next target.

We have just considered several aspects of the influence of the terrain on offensive operations. The terrain is likewise a factor in the defensive combat, should the purpose be either to establish a post or to effect a provisory reorganization in the course of operations.

The establishment of a day's-end bivouac must put the troops under cover of the enemy fire or assault, as well as to provide an easy departure for the next day. A sheltered area, a village in TONKIN, a coconut grove, will constitute an excellent bivouac provided they are thoroughly reconnoitered, searched and strongly held. It is also necessary that these sheltered areas be sufficiently large so as not to constituted a perfect nest for mortar-shells. Otherwise, it is preferable to bivouac for the night in open ground on condition that it is far from any sheltered area favoring the infiltration of the enemy.

- The intermediate region - We have extended ourselves considerably on the paddy-fields and the swamps because of the importance of the two big deltas which constitute the vital sectors of Vietnam.

Let's move now to the sector which in general terms I shall call Intermediate Region. By this designation I want to indicate not only the area which in TONKIN is called the Intermediate Region (the boudaries of which, incidentally, never having been established), but in a general way all the fringe areas, between the Delta and the paddy fields and the high wooded hills, and even the forest areas in the plains. In other words, the indefinite sector which is not concretely the paddy-fields, nor the forest, nor the hills.

The intermediate regions - that of Tonkin, towards the Song-Cau, the Clear River, or toward Hoa-Binh, or in COCHIN CHINA, the strip which at Tay-Ninh develops itself toward the east and the north of Saigon - present most varied aspects. But essentially they are undulated regions and rolling hills, or with flood-free elevations; the growth of population of Vietnam is reaching these lands which

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are acquiring value. Occasionally, even the big forest has disappeared due to natural causes, or it subsists only in spots. So, the terrain is here and there covered with vegetation or all of a sudden bare and open.

Summing up, the shape of the terrain, the landscape, the general features of vegetation, resemble the typical aspects of the land in Europe. So, to given characteristics of the terrain one must expect analogous influence of it on the operations.

I precisely say "analogous" and not similar. This, however, does not preclude to define these Intermediate Regions as the type of terrain which we in Europe would consider it classical, that is to say the kind of terrain so thoroughly analyzed by the French Army regulations, which may prove of particular help.

Since these terrains are extremely varied, even more so than the paddy-fields regions, we are going to elaborate extensively on their generalities while on the way pointing out their essential features.

To start with, being a classical terrain (in the sense of our definition above), the employ of weapons will also be within the classical concept, and so will be the apportionment. We are not going to employ anymore the fluvial flotillas of the Navy, nor the amphibious devices. Conversely, there will be normal use of the armor, the reconnaissance vehicles and the tanks, which are no more bound to the roads and which can operate either individually or with the Infantry. Artillery here is likewise no more bound to the roads, and finds areas for deployment and observation.

The whole disposition here has a less tyrannical axis of direction; the communication routes are no longer essential. On the contrary, what acquires importance, both from the point of view of maneuvers as a whole (I do not dare to say from the strategic point of view) and the stand point of tactics proper, are the long lines of terrain features: hill-crests, valleys and lines of sheltered areas. These long lines, which on the other hand have a different value in accordance with the echelon, group mobile, battallion or section level, are the dominant factors in the maneuvering.

These terrain lines form a sort of screens and partition a series of successive enclosed fields, called terrain compartments. This term demands an explanation because some times it has an excessive meaning and other times it has a narrow one, depending on the operational echelon one considers.

An area delimited, for instance, by a ridge of mountains or by a river difficult to cross, can be a terrain compartment for a large unit, a division, or even a mobile group, because in that area such large unit finds the enclosed field where she can deploy its infantry and its tanks, or where it can be protected by the artillery and against flank attacks from the enemy.

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On the contrary, for a small unit, battalion or company, the terrain compartment will be the enclosed field, of restricted surface, delimited by crests (even of mediocre height) and by close-set sheltered areas, woods or villages forming wide and deep screens obstructing both the view and the trajectory of flat fire. The result is that the small unit has little to fear about the immediate fire of enemy elements situated outside the compartment. Besides, it can spread out within the compartment to gain fire superiority.

We must make an observation regarding the methods of fighting in INDOCHINA.

In the Europe-type wars, even when there is not a continuous front, the small units are nevertheless very often able to join other units and are usually covered on the flanks; when a terrain compartment is assigned to a unit as its zone of action, the crest or the sheltered area which laterally separates two terrain compartments, is included in the zone of the unit more in need of it for its maneuvering.

Our instruction regulations insist on this point, which is also applicable in the case where a unit is properly placed side by side with other units and must operate in a narrow front. But here, the zones of action are outspread, the lateral liaisons are difficult, and as soon as a unit - mobile group or battalion - becomes isolated, it is indispensable to it to embrace into its zone of action not only other terrain compartments but even far out ground from which to watch the wood edges, so propitious for enemy surprises.

The terrain compartment concept, in short, which in a frontal war is a fundamental one, retains its classical value in the intermediate regions, but it must be made flexible to fit the particular demands of the war in Indochina.

To this compartment concept, one must add the other concept, fundamental too, of the terrain strong points. All the points of the terrain are, in fact, not of the same importance; some parts, unavoidable crossing points, crossroads, villages or brushwoods, and particularly the dominant heights, play an essential role, either when the success of our maneuver depends on our capturing them or when their capture is indispensable to counteract the possibility of a maneuver by the adversary.

The infantry advance consists in jumping from one strong point to the next; the successive objectives are bordered by terrain compartments and by strong points, and at each jump between two objectives the disposition of the forces may vary and must be adapted to the local characteristics of the terrain, with much more flexibility than that demanded by the paddy-fields.

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In the intermediate regions, the extreme variety of the terrain makes it difficult to analyse the particular aspects that it may present.

The bare terrains are easy way for the Infantry which can use the help of the armor and can have a good artillery support, while it can deploy widely. But such terrains also lend themselves to the defense on account of the excellent field of fire they provide. The assailant, then, must look for them, particularly if it disposes of important material means, cannon and armor, allowing it to assuredly gain the fire superiority over the defender and to neutralize its action. Contrarily, an attack launched without sufficient support, in open ground, against an enemy master of its gunnery, might bring a bloody defeat.

Open terrains, with far unobstructed view, preclude the surprise; they lend themselves to operations in force.

The disposition of the Infantry in such cases must be arranged in big echelons in width and depth, an indispensable provision in order not to offer thick targets to the enemy fire, which is feasible by well organizing the intervention of the reserve echelons.

Partitioned, sheltered terrains are favorable to infiltration; therefore, they are propitious to the maneuvering of a good infantry force, well-trained and flexible. However, the advance in them is slow, the liaison more difficult, the coordination of the infantry and artillery fire very tricky, and the armor support practically impossible.

They are terrains for surprise, although enemy fire should be expected only at short distance. Sheltered terrains should be sought after by adversaries planning surprise or lacking the necessary means to neutralize the sure blow of the enemy. However, even enjoying full superiority, these terrains are not to be systematically avoided; very far from it, since they can offer excellent possibilities of discrete approach and attack at short distance.

On the other hand, war is a two-player game; one is to go and look for the enemy wherever he is, but one may also be forced, like it or not, to fight in sheltered terrains. This one can do, provided one takes the adequate disposition, keeps watchful, maintains a close formation, plans well the halts to contact the lateral liaisons, is careful to maintain direction and keeps in mind the particular conditions of intervention of the artillery.

One must make also a distinction between the elevations and the depressions of the terrain, both having advantages and inconveniences. One must consider each particular case.

I am going to read to you a fragment of the regulations on infantry combat:

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"The terrain elevations make possible to have far ahead view and to gain dominant fire position, two demoralizing factors for the enemy. On the other hand, these elevations are open to the view of the enemy and attract its fire; they create dead angles. The terrain depressions, the valleys, to a certain extent protect from ground observation and from the enemy's observed fire. They provide favorable avenues of approach for the progression and maneuvering of the reserves. But, very often, are systematically subjected to heavy fire from the enemy."

To this pertinent thoughts one must add the necessary corrections regarding the terrain particularities and the type of war.

The fire considered mainly by our regulations is the artillery, a fire which up to now, even in TONKIN, is not likely to be expected from the Viet Minh. The difficulties of advance are mainly attributed to the vegetation, which can also reduce and even write off the advantages offered by the elevations as regards the view. However, I personally believe that it is a good norm, whenever it is possible, to conduct the maneuver through the terrain elevations, if no more on account of the feeling of moral advantage that one derives from it. But one must never systematize and, I repeat, in each case one must weight the pro and the contra.

It is no doubt in the so-called Intermediate Regions where the terrain, because of its great variety, must be more carefully and thoroughly analysed, since its aspects are not uniform and may change within a short distance. In making such an analysis, one must consider the kind of vegetation, the fact that the enemy has practically no artillery, the importance of close security, not only forward but to the rear and the flanks, and the need of maintaining the communications.

- The thick forest - The terrain covered by thick forest is a very special terrain, and any unit operating in it for the first time becomes confused, has a feeling of helplessness and even of anguish. At first sight, the forest looks hostile. However, overcoming the ancestral awe of the race for the forest, it is in the forest the Viet Minh has taken refuge. In turn, the franco-vietnamese troops, whenever they have been obliged to install themselves in the forest, they have discovered it offers numerous advantages to those who frequent it and know how to profit from them; but one must know the forest characteristics.

Contrary to what is some times believed, there is not impassable underbrush and movement is not confined to the trails. One goes through anywhere on compass bearing; although the marching is slow, at times coming down to 300 meters per hour. View is extremely limited, to 10 or 20 m. maximum; it is therefore impossible to part company with the parallel columns and to deploy. The formation is mandatorily single file, with flank protection a few meters away.

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But, if our view is limited, so is the enemy's; the only noise can warn you on the approach of troops, and silence is the requisite of surprise. Surprise plays both ways, for us and for the adversary. In fact, almost invariably one engages the enemy by surprise and combat starts with a brutal shock of the head elements. The total lack of view attaches a capital importance to the keeping of the marching direction. In the immensity of the forest, the targets are always poorly defined and are difficult to locate and discover. This is not due to the lack of precision of maps - which, no matter what one hears, are usually excellent, at least regarding the ordinary survey - but because of the fact that the reference marks are few and one can pass a few meters away from them without seeing them.

One must then depend on a guide - with all the inconvenients involved - or on slowly and untiringly searching the forest. This precludes any concentric maneuver of several columns on the same target, since it is impossible to foresee a schedule of march and the junction can never be effected at the precise moment.

But the difficulties that the forest presents against us, are also known to the enemy, although this is to our advantage: Provided that one does not follow the trails or continue in the same itinerary, ambush is not to be expected. Even after defeat, a detachment forced to break off combat can, by frequently changing direction, by marching momentarily along the waters of a stream, decidedly throw off its pursuers and vanish into the forest. That's why the hide-outs of the enemy, even when they are far away, are not protected against our blows, because light detachments can creep to great distances, even in areas infested with rebel elements. If it is the matter of a deep penetration, toward an objective liable to be strongly held, the action can be carried out by forces of considerable importance which would be a folly to use alone in other terrains.

Clearings in the forest are very important accidents of terrain. Their crossing or attacking is a delicate operation, because the enemy is observing from afar and can lay an ambush. Small detachments should avoid the clearings; if one must cross them, one must count with adequate strength and thoroughly search in advance the edges of the forest.

Large clearings are to be considered under another light: a line more or less continuous of clearings can constitute an axis of rapid progression for a large group. Some times the armor can venture into it, and this gives the march and the maneuver great flexibility. If the detachment has artillery available, it is under such protection and even with previous interdiction fire that the forest edges can be attacked.

In connection with day's-end bivouacs, the small clearings are to be systematically avoided, while the large clearings, offering vast fire fields, can be used and specifically sought af-

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ter if one wishes to deploy the Artillery.

- The mountains - The combat in mountains of great differences of level offers remarkable particularities and deserve special study. We are not going to linger extraordinarily on the subject because on account of lack of time, we must sacrifice the types of terrain which, for the moment at least, are only the theatre of detail operations. However, we will lay stress on the nature of the Indochina mountains because, without exception, they dominate the big forest, which is crossed by very few routes of communication, roads or even trails, and which offers few or no resources at all.

In mountains not covered by thick forest, the grid of crests and valleys is dominant both strategically and from the point of view of tactics. It is only through the valleys that one can penetrate in depth the inner mountain mass; but each valley is dominated by crests and one cannot master the valley without holding them. One can say that one advances in the valleys after having maneuvered in the crests. But this goes only for non wooded mountains or those thinly covered with forest.

In the thick forest the problem is different: we said above that there is no such thing as an unpassable forest, and it is true; but when to the difficulties of thick vegetation one must add those of the steep hills, then the march proves to be exhausting and cannot be carried out for long distances at a time. Furthermore, the crest positions lose here part of their importance, which consists in providing far view over the plains.

Summing up, then, in the Indochina mountains, the axis of progression are formed by the valleys, the valley and mountain trails and roads. The enemy resistance is built up within these axis. It is no use to try to maneuver it through the crests, which are far away and imply hours of marching and which, on account of the vegetation, do not command the lower terrains.

Nevertheless, it is through the heights, have-way up the slope, spur by spur, that the resistance is maneuvered. A high position is always advantageous even if it does not offer a view or even the possibility of fire; the force attacking from up down has always a certain moral superiority. The difficult matter in a thick forest without view, is to discover the flank of the enemy position in order to move to a suitable place to attack said flank.

Among other mountain characteristics we shall mention the exceptional importance of the unavoidable points of passage, mainly the mountain cols. The absolute impossibility for the vehicles to leave the road, the precariousness of the roads themselves, missing bridges over torrents, and the land-slides over routes bordering high cliffs, add to the difficulty and imply hours delay and arduous work.

We have been talking about the mountains thickly covered with forest. There are in Indochina mountains where the savanna replaces the forest; this is typical in the AN CHAU region, west of LAI CHAU, in Vietnam; in certain corners of Upper Laos, i.e., in the Tran Ninh. There the top of the mountains are bare, the horizons wide open, the valleys are dominated by the crests. In the field of tactics, the problems concerning the combining of arms, the deployment, the terrain compartment concept present more or less the same characteristics of those in the "intermediate regions" and call for similar solutions.

One must put on a separate level the specific mountains that form large, cracked calcareous lays, scored in all directions, of chaotic topography, which raise like inland reefs. This is a favorite terrain for the guerrillas and for ambushes.

These layers of rock which cover only a small part of the Vietnam surface would be of negligible importance if some of them were not near the great passage routes leading to China.

In such a terrain, only the foot-man can venture into any maneuvering, even for small elements it becomes almost impossible. It is an impenetrable lair to shelter large groups of forces, a sure hide-out, from which all along the Vietnam history rebels have been able to defy the government forces.

The only solution there, I believe, for any modern army is to avoid such calcareous terrain and to remove away from it its axis of communication.

- The forest-clearing - This is a form of landscape quite particular, which cannot be disregarded because it covers vast expands, particularly of Cambodia and Laos.

The relief of these forest-clearing lands is the typical one of the plateau with long undulations; in the dry season, the vehicles can go through almost anywhere; in the rainy season, they are stopped by the flooded valley ways and by the long stretches of spongy ground and one has to pick up possible points of crossing. View is not limited to a few meters like in the thick forest, but stops at a few hundred meters in all directions. In the rainy season, tall grass covers the soil and the thin forest is desperately monotonous; there are few terrain points more interesting than others.

Considered solely from the viewpoint of its possible importance on the operations, one could say that the forest-clearing appears like a vast plain without obstacles, but without far away view and whose soil is soaked by the rains: all arms can then find their normal employment, with the exception that for research and air reconnaissance, and for the emplacement of artillery, conditions are not very favorable. In such a terrain the infantry can and must advance covered in all directions; the easy marching for the reserves make their intervention easy.

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NEED OF DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF THE TERRAIN
BY THE INTRODUCED UNITS

Abstracts of a Note issued on July 27, 1953
by the General commanding the F.T.N.V., and
of the instructions passed on, the same year,
by a Zone Commander

.....For the best fulfillment of their missions and to facilitate the task of the outside units assigned to operate in their areas, it is important that the commanders of Subsectors, Headquarters and Posts, be quite familiar with the geography of their respective territory:

- road and dikes network (width, condition, obstacles, etc.)
- waterways and canals (width, depth, volume of water, considering the season and the eventual tide)
- crossing points (bridges, footbridges, fords, ferryboats, barges, etc.)
- condition of the paddy-fields (dry or flooded, degree of flood in accordance with the season)
- shape of the villages, type of natural defenses (ponds, canals, hedges, low walls, location of their entrances and pathways, etc.)

This data must be noted on a large scale map, kept always up to date after every reconnaissance, both at the post, headquarters and subsector.

When the importance of the rebel forces in an area limits the scope of the sorties, the Post commanders, or the Subsector and Headquarter heads must take advantage of the operations carried out by the mobile units of the zone to report details on the acquired knowledge of the terrain.

Furthermore, all commanders of strong points and headquarters must devote themselves to select capable guides to lead by night the operational units.

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EXAMPLE OF INDEX CARDS TO KEEP IN FILE

CARD No. 1 - Villages and hamlets in the sub-Headquarters
(for instance, in the form of a table)

- Name of the villages and hamlets in same
- Population
- Religion
- Names of prominent people
- Standard of living of the inhabitants
- Plans of the villages

CARD No. 2 - Market places

- Location
- Villages frequenting them
- Products exchanged
- Activity : head of the district, jurisdiction.

CARD No. 3 - Vietnamese administrative organization

- Canton; head of canton, jurisdiction
- Sub-district: head of sub-district, jurisdiction
- District: head of district, jurisdiction.

CARD No. 4 - Passability of the terrain (for instance, in the form of two maps scale 1/25,000 - one for the dry season, another for the rainy season)

- Passable for the infantry
- Passable for vehicles.

CARD No. 5 - Itineraries (i.e., schematic sketches such as the ones shown in the Annex) (below)

- Roads
- Trails.

Annex: MODEL OF ITINERARY SKETCHES

Concise sketch	Kms	Outstanding points	Passability	Miscellaneous Encampments - Approach
	0	Village A	Macadam	Narrow road, paddy-fields on both sides Open ground
	2.5	Vaulted culvert		
	4	Steel bridge		One-way - 8 m long classe (10)

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Concise sketch	Kms	Outstanding points	Passability	Miscellaneous Encampmt. Approach
	5		Bad Many holes	
	6.2	Bamboo groves		Very bushy and hardly passable. Light vehicles can go around by the left side.
	7.6	Road to C		Unpassable to P.L. U turn possible
	8.8	X Crag skirted by the road		
	12	Village B		Some brick houses toward the church. Many hedges.

Note - This model is also applicable to navigable rivers or canals.

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CHAPTER II

THE ADVERSARY

MAIN CHARACTER OF THE VIET MINH TACTICS

Abstract of a report by the F.T.N.V. G2

dated July 1952

..... At the beginning, tactics gave a great reputation to the guerrillas. The unimaginable successes of the R.C. 4 led VO NGUYEN GIAP to believe (against the advice of DONG KY PHUONG, leader of the P.C.I.) that the time for large operations had arrived. That's why he launched the various 1951 campaigns, which were a failure. At present, without entirely renouncing to the original idea, he has come to the concept of a generalized guerrilla war, supported by infiltrated regular units.

The following are the new principles:

- Dislocation of the Union forces, by beginning with the employ of small units and up to a generalized guerrilla war, designed to attract the Franco-Vietnamese troupes to villages fortified in advance.
- Rapidity of dispersion, to escape the troops' grip and to reduce the risk of losses.
- Rapidity of concentration to proceed to the attack of posts and vulnerable points, under the best possible conditions.

Regular units serve normally as backbone for the groupments formed with regional or provincial units. Assembled by Sections or Companies, in accordance with the advance position of the established bases, their mission is to exploit without respite any opportunity that comes up. The large-scale attacks or ambushes, well-prepared in advance, are conducted by a Battalion previously concentrated, eventually reinforced by heavy arms.

Great flexibility can be obtained by the way of forming the action groupments. Abandoning the rigidity of the traditional formations (group-section-company), which are only maintained for encampment or marching, the Viet Minh, whenever it has the initiative, makes the groupments with specialists applicable to the specific missions:

- dynamiters or attack pioneers,
- mortar-battery groups,
- automatic arms groups in fire bases,
- assault groups armed with P.M., grenades, or even with machetes.

These new tactics require the introduction of regular units into the delta. This infiltration by whole regiment, or by section, depending of the sector, is governed by the terrain, by the proximity of the internal bases, and by the alertness of the Franco-Vietnamese troops.

The enemy has found out that such units rarely sally out by night. So it is after dark that the enemy breaks into the surveillance zone, between the P.A., often guided by their own lighting. The crossing points are protected by regional units and the near-by posts are covered by riflemen. Some times both points are the same, the same waterway crossings. They are generally known by the Union troops which rarely watch them, at night. Rebels consider themselves safe if they have been able to get into a "prepared" village in the delta, before dawn.

These infiltrations evidently incite the friendly Commandment to multiply the mopping-up operations, which are the obsession of the enemy. Dreading mainly the encirclement, the enemy takes the most thorough defense measures: billets guarded very much in advance, night and dawn patrols, which establish contact with small units, strict discipline and extreme watching.

The counter-mop -up tactics now favored are:

Not to attack unless it is absolutely necessary, carry mobility to the maximum, to abstain of any stubborn defense of the terrain against forces of equal or superior strength, but, on the other hand, to hold the bases at any cost; finally, to act permanently against the rear and the G.M. flanks, their communication lines, the P.C., the artillery batteries, and the depots.

Encirclement is to be avoided at any cost. In face of a raid, the Viet Minh vanishes behind a curtain of regional forces, eventually flank-covered by a small regular unit. The gross of regular forces establishes itself in two detachments in the villages located both sides of the front of action and counter-attack the enemy by the flank or on the rear.

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When the encirclement is a real threat, the rebels try to escape from it by concentrating all their forces on an element considered weak. If the encirclement is accomplished, they get as close as possible to the assailant, delay the assault, force the artillery to intervene, tries to hold until night comes in order to escape by profiting of the slowness of the franco-vietnamese troops to set up the ambushes. The rebels then look for a crossing on the rivers that limit the mass of the attacking forces, the watch on the river being usually not continuous.

Their usual procedure is to send 3-man patrols to reconnoiter the points of possible escape. If found, two watchman are posted, also a protection element, before committing the unit. The withdrawal is then made through a "parrot" march. In cases of extreme encirclement, the rebels order a general dispersion of individuals in civilian clothes, and establish two or three points of rally.

In all cases, the enemy endeavors to maintain in reserve one third of its committed regular units and if the gross of the troops becomes encircled then launches a strong action. If the enemy succeeds to get away, it rallies 20 kilometers back and counter-mops up attacking the weak points of the assailant.

When the rebels do not expect an important action, they carry out their customary activities of attacking posts, laying ambushes, putting in use their normal methods of fighting (active or passive) against the artillery, the armor, and the aviation.

The adversary has also devoted much time in studying the ways to destroy the four elements which enjoy superiority within the Union forces: motor transportation, armor, artillery and aviation.

Motor transportation is subject to ambushes, immediate contact mines, catch time-mines (which do not blow out until a number of vehicles has gone by), hand-operated mines, that is to say means of attack rather than tactics proper.

Extremely concerned by the apparition in the battle field of the armored vehicles, the enemy recommends:

- sniper fire on the leader of the tank
- use of S.K.Z
- mines

Also recommended against the tanks are obstacles 30 cm high made of bamboo stakes, mortar stop-fire, automatic arms fire against the crews on places weakly protected by the armor. Besides, the enemy does not hesitate to attack the tanks from the dead angle and by using hand-grenades. One of our armored sub-groups was charged by a battalion sprung from a village 300 m

away, the last assault waves of it coming to die scarcely 20 meters away from the vehicles.

Against the artillery, the enemy prescribes active and passive defense. For the former, it uses commandos which infiltrate themselves up to the battery positions and, profiting of the negligence or fatigue of the watchers, endeavor to blow up the guns (HOA-BINH). Harassment by mortar is also used. For the latter cases, the methods are varied; the organization of the terrain comes first. Various schemes are used to secure the well-timed final protection fire, not launching the attack until it is considered that most of the ammunition is exhausted. The enemy also recommends to its troops to stick very close to assailant so to subject it to the fire of its own artillery.

Against the aviation, rebels use the same method of sticking close to the adversary. While on march, the enemy troops, with helmet and most of times the back camouflaged with branches, disperses at the first sound of aircraft and crouching down they can be taken for bushes or along the road by hedges or culverts.

The air defense by heavy machineguns, efficient when the aircraft fly low, sometimes is quite considerable. But most of the times it does not respond to the missions of the fighters for fear to massive bombing by the B.26s.

Finally, a well planned camouflage, and good organization of the terrain (individual dug-outs prepared in advance in the itineraries) puts the enemy well-undercover.

.....

THE SEVEN MAIN POINTS OF THE GUERRILLA TACTICS

Abstract from a V.M. document

The seven main points of the guerrilla tactics are: intelligence, initiative, will, decision, secrecy, swiftness and perfection.

.....
HOW TO FIGHT INTELLIGENTLY? : Here are 7 rules to apply:

1. To simulate that you are attacking a place, but actually attack a different one in order to prevent the enemy to organize its protection, while attracting it to a single point, hold it in subjection, and then smash it. Example: Harass noisily one place, but discretely attack a different one. To simulate small strength but actually be numerous.
2. To remain now visible now invisible so the adversary never knows where we are and where to attack. Example: When the enemy enters a village, attack it for a while, then vanish. But when the enemy rallies, then jump in force to its pursuit.
3. To avoid the strongholds of the enemy, attacking only its weak points; in other words, do not obstinately oppose all our forces to a superior enemy. Get the enemy on his weak points: rear elements of a marching troop, isolated individuals, resting elements or when they fall back.

4. To know when it is necessary to advance or to withdraw:

When a superior enemy attacks us in force and with violence, one needs to fall back provisorily to look for the chance of counter-attacking it immediately on its weak points. Example: Wait until the enemy is demoralized, tired, or too trustful.

Never combat temerarily or obstinately; never cross a distance in a single run, and never remain on the same spot.

5. To attack and to annihilate the enemy, but to fall back immediately before the enemy has time to react or to bring reinforcements to encircle us, or before the enemy can call its aviation. Once the combat is finished, withdraw rapidly or look for the stage of another battle, to prevent the enemy to come back on us.

Without this swiftness we would risk to lose favorable opportunities, to lose men and ammunition and to be besieged by the enemy.

6. Not to persist on a combat unless the success is sure, otherwise abandon it.

One must not attack foolishly or hold at any price, nor to act uselessly with obstination. What is important before undertaking a combat is to consider if the success is assured. If it is not, one must take a firm decision to refuse the fight and wait for a more favorable occasion.

During the combat, if one is sure of victory, one must launch the assault with resolution to smash the enemy; otherwise one will hold for a certain time and then withdraw without regret or hesitation.

7. Not to combat employing always the same tactics.

One must vary the methods of fighting, and this calls for intelligence and cunning in all our activities.

TO STRIVE TO MAINTAIN INITIATIVE OF MOVEMENT
IS TO FORCE THE ENEMY TO CONFORM TO OUR INTENTIONS

5 POINTS GOVERN THE INITIATIVE OF MOVEMENT:

1. To well-study the adverse situation, that is to say to try to know exactly the disposition of the enemy, the attitude of its cadres and combatants toward one another, their morale and the degree of their fighting ability, etc.....
2. To diminish our weak points: shortage of arms and men, fatigue, unfavorable weather conditions. Take good care of our arms, recover as many as possible from the enemy field, improve our rudimentary equipment, and persist on the propaganda to recruit guerrilla troops. In combat, cooperate closely with friendly units and guerrillas from the neighboring regions; try to win time to fight at the most favorable moment, etc.
3. To discover the weak points of the adversary: low morale, poor watch service, loose traffic control, difficult supply, activities that have become a routine, etc. ... To profit of these weak points to attack the enemy and to urge the population to take active part in the fighting.
4. To make the impossible to force the enemy to conform to our intentions and, conversely, to avoid to be led by the enemy. Example: When the enemy is coming against us with large forces to attack us at a given point, let it go by and then attack the enemy from the back. If the enemy plans to enter a village without going through its main entrance, let's force it anyway to go by that entrance where we will have accumulated our means of destruction.

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5. If the enemy watches itself carefully without presenting no weak point, one must create in it such weak points. There are several ways:

To resort the diversion and harassment to disturb and tire the adversary; surround and divide its positions; cut its lines of communications to force it to come and repair them and then attack it there. In the course of the combat, to simulate a withdrawal inviting the enemy to pursue us up to our positions and then smash it. To attack the enemy by means of tricks and provocations.

THE WILL TO ATTACK IS THE ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF THE INITIATIVE

Since the plan of the enemy is keep up the war for war's sake and to induce the Vietnamese to do the fighting against the Vietnamese, it will certainly attack us even if we do not attack. To allow being attacked or to limit oneself to passive defense, is to put oneself in the impossibility of protecting the population and to risk the exhaustion of our forces. On the contrary, by attacking the enemy, we put it in a constant defense position, we wear it out, we stop it to further its activities, we snatch from it the initiative and make its searching more difficult. This is the best way to carry out our glorious mission: "To protect the population".

THE WILLINGNESS TO THE UTMOST EFFORT FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY IS ONE OF THE NOBLEST FEATURES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

.....

HOW TO EXERT ONESELF TO ATTACK THE ENEMY?

1. One must continuously look for the enemy's weak points, in order to make use of the opportunity of attack. Once these weak points are discovered or created, we must muster all our potential and proceed to attack. The more we attack, the more weak points will the enemy present. This is what we understand for "marching to attack, carry out the attack, withdraw and then try to attack again". By integrally applying this principle we will secure our initiative of movement.

2. One must apply the following tactics: "If the enemy advances, let's withdraw; if the enemy withdraws, let's pursuit it."

SLOWNESS AND DOUBT DO NOT GO WITH RESOLUTION

The swift changes occurred in our rear adversely influence our intentions. So, we must study carefully the situation before

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we can carry out or modify our plans.

Resolution means to be decided to attack the enemy without delay each time we are sure of the success in advance.

Each time the situation is unfavorable to us, the withdrawal is mandatory: one must withdraw with resolution and then look for the chance of attack somewhere else. Any hesitation in critical moments can cause irreparable defeats.

Resolution goes hand to hand with the spirit of initiative. Whenever one has the chance to attack with probability of success, without harming our bases or the general plans, one must do it without hesitation without awaiting orders from higher authorities. The slightest hesitation will mean the loss of an opportunity.

IMPORTANCE OF SECRECY

In the enemy's rear, the population continuously comes and goes from the guerrilla zone to the provisorily occupied zone, and viceversa. So the control of the population is impossible and one cannot distinguish the loyal elements from the traitors. The G2 spies easily infiltrate the guerrilla zone and our villages, to gather information, to establish secret liaison bases aimed to destroy our bases and our forces.

On the other side, our guerrilleros do the same in regards to the enemy. But they can be detected more easily, either by the rebel authorities, by militiamen of the village, by disseminated spies, or by mere citizens anxious for tranquillity or under fear of reprisals from the enemy. However, there are people who gladly welcome our soldiers.

Under these conditions, a single careless moment is sufficient to let the secret out, and this will harm the initiative of the operations and will allow the enemy to attack by surprise and destroy our bases.

Therefore, it is indispensable to watch for the maintaining of secrecy, so the enemy will not know our intentions or movements. Thus, we will be able to protect our forces, to destroy the enemy and to prevent surprise attacks, air and artillery bombardments.

SWIFTNESS IS THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

In the rear zone, the enemy is around us and close by. It controls the routes of communication, possesses transportation means, equipment for transmission and organized liaisons. So, the enemy can attack us unawares, send reinforcements or call for the intervention of the artillery or the air force. That's its main asset.

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To counteract this enemy asset, to convert it in a weakness, one must act swiftly, and we mean without delay or hesitation; it is a matter of gaining time to fully profit of favorable circumstances to attack the enemy successfully.

One must act rapidly because the enemy's negligences are short and far between and if not used they will work against us (intervention of the artillery and the air force).

HOW TO ACT SWIFTLY?

In the daily activities: Any item or document must be kept in good order so it can be located immediately in case of need. Arms must be always clean and the ammunition, mines, and explosives must be kept always ready to use.

During combat: All assault or withdrawal movements must be executed rapidly; so must the fire. Each one must, with his combat spirit and heroism, hit the morale of the enemy at the first minute of combat. Particularly in the ambushes, the assaults must be simultaneous to prevent the enemy from analysing the situation and from reacting.

After each combat, the combing of the battle field and the salvage must be effected quickly. The gathering of the loot should not be prolonged too long. Pick up the arms and documents and withdraw immediately.

Total extermination means to kill the enemy and to take all its arms. For the DU KICH and the small isolated groups, extermination does not consist in the destruction of a post, or the annihilation of an enemy platoon. To kill every soldier, every group, is also extermination; and it is extermination even to a single soldier taking away his weapon. So, complete extermination means the annihilation of an enemy element, large or small, and the recovery of all the armament.

Before each combat it is important to establish the number of enemy elements, to destroy and the amount of arms to recover, considering the means and the strength of the adversary.

Total extermination wears out the enemy in men and arms and weakens it gradually. In a combat in which we gain the initiative, it is less profitable to throw back 100 or 300 men, than to kill 2 or 3 of them and taking away their armament.

On the other hand, the total extermination of the enemy allows us to maintain all our strength and to increase our arms.

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It helps us to command more respect and trust in the eyes of the population, all in benefit of the guerrilla. Thus, we will be able to sustain a long-term war against the enemy.

HOW TO COMPLETELY ANNIHILATE THE ENEMY?

Once the schedule of extermination is established, and once the roles assigned, each combatant must have absolute confidence in the plan he is to carry out at whatever the price. The preparation must be carefully completed. During the action, each man must act quickly and prove courage in the execution of his mission. To be reminded is the fact that only the impetuous assault assures the success and the annihilation of the enemy. On the contrary, indecision leads to death without chance to eliminate the enemy. If sometimes the sacrifice of an individual or of a small element becomes necessary, one must take the decision to assure victory.

If the enemy reacts decisively and faces us without any possibility of success on our part, the one must deliberately break contract and withdraw.

Returning to total extermination, we must nevertheless avoid our tendency to engage in very big combats thinking of great profits. Counting with the combat initiative, we must first evaluate the force of the adversary and of our own, and then determine the results to be obtained.

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES MUST ONE APPLY COMBAT OF ATTRITION?

The two aims of the the guerrilla tactics are: attrition and extermination. When we are unexpectedly attacked by an enemy superior in number and that, because of the unfavorable aspects of the terrain, we cannot withdraw (i.e., when we found ourselves in a passive situation), then we must resort to the combat of attrition.

Summing up, combat of attrition must be mandatorily employed when we are forced into a passive situation. However, the aim of the combat of attrition continues to be the extermination of the enemy.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF :

"ATTACK WITH THE GREATEST VIOLENCE AND RAPIDITY"

This sentence first of all means to attack the enemy without respite and from all sides. Thus, the adversary does not know where to turn, becomes disconcerted and shows its weak points which are then immediately and rapidly exploited by our elements
.....

To attack "continuously" does not mean to attack day and night

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without interruption. It means: after the end of a combat, think immediately of the next one and prepare it diligently for execution with the shortest delay. This is an obligation we must accept if we want to hold the enemy always breathless without time to recover or to organize.

Cooperation with the village elements during combat in their vicinity, forces the enemy to disperse its forces and permits us to maneuver more rapidly.

Continuous attack and close cooperation with the elements of the villages and hamlets, help us to discover the weak points of the enemy, and the knowledge of these permits us to prepare in advance a whole program of combined activities.

THE ATTACK WITH THE GREATEST VIOLENCE AND RAPIDITY CALLS FOR A HIGH FIGHTING SPIRIT, GREAT RAPIDITY OF MOVEMENT AND CLOSE LIAISON WITH THE HIGH COMMAND

The opponent Army offers us striking examples. The enemy is superior to our guerrillas, in techniques, in armament and in numerical strength. But even so, it flees very often when we attack. It does not dare to advance without the protection of aviation or artillery. All this is due to the fact that its soldiers do not have fighting spirit; they lack confidence in their commanders; and they lack solidarity since they denigrate one another.

Conversely, even if we are less well equipped than our adversary, we are of a stature capable to impose fear to the enemy and capable to defeat it, because we are moved by spirit of sacrifice and have a solidarity the enemy lacks.

Numerically we are inferior to our enemy. So, we do not hesitate to engage in combat with contempt for death, under the shells of the enemy artillery and the bombs of its aircraft. We find great joy in the hand to hand fighting. Our aim is to conclude the combats with victory for us.

That's why we can attack energetically and act rapidly in combat.

WHY THE SUPPORT OF THE POPULATION IS NECESSARY TO THE APPLICATION OF GUERRILLA TACTICS?

In the zone occupied by the enemy, the latter is superior to us in numerical strength, armament and means of communication. However, in the course of the last seven years, our guerrillas have been successful in applying their special tactics. Our guerrilla units are every day more important numerically and

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they are better equipped. They own this improvement to the support of the peasants who understand perfectly well the fact that our guerrillas fight in the defense of their lives and fields.

Upon applying our guerrilla tactics, we must make use of the seven principles described above. Thus, without the "popular antennas" we would have no communications; without the popular support we could not act in secret nor execute rapid movements. Without the population, the guerrillas could not attack the enemy, nor assemble their strength, and would be unable to keep up the fighting with their characteristic ardor and swiftness.

THE DUTY OF EACH GUERRILLA IS TO PRESS THE POPULATION

TO TAKE ACTIVE PART, MORE AND MORE, TO THE ACTIVE COMBAT

Each guerrilla must continuously remember that his duty is fight to preserve the lives and the property of the population. For this purpose he must:

- a) Always and everywhere observe a strict discipline in regards to the population, that is to say, do not steal from them or attempt against their customs and traditions.
- b) Carry out to the letter the policy of solidarity proclaimed by President HO, by the Government and by the V.M. Front. Concretely do not maintain prejudices regarding such and such religion or such and such element. Come to the aid of patriots, no matter who they are, participating in the Resistance.
- c) Watch for the interests of the people and never attempt against their lives or property.

Before combat, hear the advice of the civil population regarding the eventual reaction of the enemy, and establish security plans to protect the population and the bases.

- d) Incite the civil population to take part in the fighting.
- e) Each guerrilla must give exemple to the rest of his group and remain always worth in every circumstance.
- f) Soldiers, guerrillas and civilians must help to protect the regional authority.

RESUME

In view of the predominance of the enemy troops, all our forces must preferably apply the guerrilla tactics.

The principles "DU" (movement) and "KICH" (attack) must always go together.

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VIET MINH ORDERED TO FIGHT
IN CLOSE COMBAT

ABSTRACT FROM A VIET MINH DOCUMENT

Close combat allows us to remedy for our technical inferiority

In close combat the target becomes bigger, more visible, and the adjustment of fire is quicker.

Our army has developed in a short period of time; in that short time we have formed a great number of combatants. Being a popular army, our forces are mainly composed by workmen and peasants and so it is important that our method of instruction be simple. That's why close combat goes perfectly well with the nature of our army.

Close combat permits us to save ammunition

Our ammunition is limited in amount. If we fire at long distance, we will need a lot more of ammunition to destroy the enemy. Let us react against the Imperialist troops' concept of profusion of bullets with the hope of having some hits. On the contrary, our principle must be: instead of using 100 cartridges for every hit, let's endeavor to get the same result with a single cartridge; then we will save 99.

Under the present conditions, of lack of modern equipment, let's resort to our manual skill; the most promising way is the close combat.

Close combat permits us protection against the aircraft, against the artillery and against distant firing

At the present moment, the enemy resorts mainly to aviation and artillery to harass us and to prevent us from getting near. But the aviation and artillery fire is only effective when we are far from the adversary. If we advance close to a post, if we mix with the enemy during combat, the effect of such fire will be considerably smaller and our losses reduced.

In close combat, the enemy cannot use its heavy weapons, such as 81 or 120 mortars. The enemy's armor, in fact mobile fortresses, are powerless within a radius of 10 to 16 meters, this being the limit of their dead angles.

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If we get close to the armor, we will be able to not only neutralise its effect, but easily destroy the enemy.

Close combat undermines the morale of the enemy

Thanks to the close combat, the quick adjustment of fire, our concentrated fire and our powerful attack, we can shake the enemy's morale to a considerable extent.

The enemy dreads our method of close combat. If we succeed in getting close to it since the inception of the combat, the enemy will get disconcerted and disorganized in front of our various ways of close combat.

Close combats permits us to attack swiftly, to maneuver rapidly and gives us the maximum chance to destroy the vital forces of the enemy

At the present moment our main mission is to destroy the vital forces of the enemy. To defeat an adversary who possesses superior resources in all aspects, we must attack in a rapid and decisive manner. Experience has taught us that any prolonged combat increases our difficulties and diminishes our possibility of destroying the enemy.

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CHAPTER III

OFFENSIVE COMBAT OF ASSIGNED UNITS

.....

MOBILE GROUP COMBAT METHODS

IN THE OFFENSIVE ACTION

Abstract from a report by the General Commander in Chief,
dated October 14, 1953

..... The Mobile Group comprises organically only those elements susceptible of being employed in any circumstance and not susceptible of dissociation because of lack of transportation.

For employment it is reinforced with elements drawn from the General Reserve which become attached to the Mobile Group for the respective missions.

Organically its comprises:

- A Commander in chief) Reduced but complete high-quarters (1 Chief of Staff.
1 G1 Officer. 1 G2 Officer. 1 G3 Officer.
1 G4B Officer. 1 Air Support Officer.
1 Officer in charge of Motor train. 1 Surgeon.
-) Signal Detachment equipped with powerful means
-) Headquarters Company with protection elements
- 3 Infantry battalions usually from different origin - Legion -
North-African - Native.
- 1 Artillery group with 4-Gun 105H.M.2 batteries (3) (in some Mobile Groups these are replaced by a Company of heavy mortars). Whenever possible, the terrain permitting, armor element is also attached to it.

For certain operations, other elements are attached: (Battalions, sub/Groupments of armor or amphibious, Commandos, etc.) which it can easily bracket or move.

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Mobiles Groups do not have auxiliary services attached (except for a limited medical service attached to the Headquarters Company). They are supported by the Territorial Services or those put at the disposal of the Operational Command.

INTELLIGENCE

The Mobile Group success of operation and its security depend essentially on the intelligence collected and its rapid exploitation. Intelligence comes from different sources and has unequal value, depending on the quality of the intelligence medium and the continuity of its activities.

Being ordinarily nomad, the Mobile Group is in a poor position to collect by itself the intelligence on the area in which it is going to operate. Its Chief then must be chiefly concerned to establish the closest and most trustful liaisons with the G2 or the intelligence officers of the Territorial Commands (divisions, Zones, Sectors, Sub-Sectors). Common intelligence action must permanently exist during the entire course of the contemplated operation. Also, whenever it is materially possible, it is necessary that the G2 of the Mobile Group or a qualified liaison officer be attached to the zone or sector's G2 headquarters with a permanent and independent radiophone connection with his Mobile Group.

Only under these conditions can the Mobile Group be assured to be thoroughly informed with sufficient time to act with rapidity and with the vigor which characterizes its action. If several Mobile Groups operate in the same zone with a common objective, then it is the function of the Operational Commander (in principle a Division Commander) coordinating the ensemble of the forces, to carry out the fusion of the different intelligence elements and to organize the special and independent liaisons.

EMPLOY OF MOBILE GROUPS IN THE DELTAS

The following operations, particularly valid for the TONKIN delta, can be extended, subject to some adaptation, to all the rice growing regions, with similar topographic characteristics.

In the deltas, at the middle of the paddy-field mosaic more or less flooded and in the network of canals and waterways, the basic terrain element are the villages and their surroundings (gardens, banana groves, graveyards) these being the only sheltered areas where the Viet Minh can anchor its units and organize the terrain which presents a particularly difficult combat problem.....

These conglomerations in string of beads, more so the more aquatic the region, offer a tremendous problem. Because of the difficult, successive and slow crossings, one cannot attack the villages from all sides. One must attack them, following the "string of beads", individually. This limits the possibility of maneuvering, and one must advance with successive efforts, displacing methodically the fire bases, and reducing to the minimum the open approaches through the flooded paddy-fields or the narrow culverts.

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Therefore you cannot attack a village from any side you want; usually there are only two possible directions of attack, diametrically opposed. Fall back movements and converging actions are not always possible and the attack units find themselves relatively isolated on their flanks at the most difficult moment of the operation, i.e. during the approach and the mopping up.

It is therefore necessary that these elements be strongly linked in depth, well fire-supported and covered.

In general, one will assign only to a battalion one or two strings of villages, located near by and in a parallel line. This permits a succession of efforts and its continuity by outpassing the head units and managing an assemble echelon. The attack of a string of villages covering an extended area, in general will have the character of a succession of ramming actions, mostly in parallel, aiming to compress the adversary against a barrage prepared in advance.

Lateral covering for the attacks can be accomplished, either by tank platoons from the Mobile Groups or by amphibious elements. Lateral blocking, usually fixed, add to the particular aspect characteristic of these operations.

Sometimes it is possible, by using the network of roads and dams, to apply to certain objectives square operations at right angles or fall back operations giving side support.

The appearance of a reconnaissance plane (1) surveilling the battle field, informs the artillery, alerts and guide the fighters or the bombers, and rather freezes the important Viet elements which cannot move anymore during the day for ample displacements, except very slowly.

Mobile Groups can then maneuver these elements, force them to concentrate within a limited space, and then encircle them. If this goal cannot be attained before nightfall, can at least inflict them heavy losses by massive concentration of artillery and aviation fire, and sometimes even destroy them through an infantry combat. However, ordinarily, with the controled delta area, the Viet Minh units avoid the combat with Mobile Groups, which fighting power fear, particularly the artillery.

By jour , the Viet Minh units do not dare to venture within the limits of the artillery range, unless it is with small, transient groups, very diluted. When they are attacked, the units endeavor to delay our attacks by defensive action and ambushes, since any break through our powerful blockings is impossible, and their only hope is the darkness of night. When night arrives, they try to escape, either en masse by a night attack against a point considered weak, or through group or even individual infiltration. For this purpose, they use any kind of trudging, particularly the waterways bed. If they do not succeed, they hide their arms, transform themselves into peasants and hide in the villages until our units go away.

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Only a long stay in the village (several days) permits to discover the hide-outs (2) of the Viet Minh, because the lack of water and food forces them to go out.

- Notes - (1) One can feel inclined to allow the reconnaissance unit, within a certain limit, a margin of initiative and of fire trust, but this is rather the attribution of the Operational Command.
- (2) The camouflage of these hide-outs demands the external complicity of the villagers.

COMBAT IN THE VILLAGES

..... To attack a village of approximately 200 or 300 m. of flank, when firmly held, requires:

- 1 infantry battalion.
- The fire of an Artillery Group (at least 2 batteries) or of a Company of heavy mortars.

If the village is fortified, it is necessary to smash it by air bombing or by 155 guns, since the 105 are inadequate.

The approach must be made on a very well chosen point allowing to concentrate all efforts and after seizing an anchor point of sufficient surface.

From this island, one shall proceed to a methodical cleaning, by sliding from island to island successively occupied, along the edges of vegetation. The problem is complicated because there is no main street in the village. The attack must be organized as one goes along in every spot.

Each effort must be preceded by artillery or mortar fire, or by a hunt attack (Napalm or strafing). A sufficient reserve units must be maintained at the initial anchor point, as support echelon, for eventual counter-attack or fall back.

The attacking units must include:

- Assault squads (riflemen with machine-guns, hand grenades, explosives, and flame throwers).
- Support squads (with automatic rifles, grenade throwers, and sharp shooters who must particularly take the heights).
- Mopping up squads which will occupy the terrain, search the cellars, and guard the prisoners and the inhabitants).

The enemy tries to obtain - and sometimes succeeds thanks to its tactics - the end-of-day combat, which is always interrupted by the arrival of night and which leaves in very precarious position the units having ventured into the village beyond the areas completely mopped up.

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Furthermore, it is necessary:

- To keep the enemy in doubt about our objectives for the day.
- To stop progression early; at least one hour before dusk, so to be able to have sufficient time to organize security measures.
- To modify, as soon as it is dark, the location of the blocking points, to secure surprise.

EMPLOY OF MOBILE GROUPS OUT OF THE DELTAS

Outside the delta, the Mobile Groups may be forced to fight in the most divers terrains: Dense forest, jungle, brush, bare croupes or croupes covered with "elephant grass". (At the end of the rainy season, the grass is 2 m tall).

Like in the delta regions, whenever they fear the intervention of the artillery or the air force, the Viet Minh units carry out offensive actions by night and during the day they resort to defensive close combat in covered and difficult terrain.

This defensive combat takes always the form of an ambush: surprise with close range fire, counter-attacks launched from a short distance on the flanks and rear, and hand to hand thrusts, cutting of lines of communication to isolate the units and cut up the columns following rare itineraries, with the ultimate purpose of encircling and destroying the separated fragments. Mortar concentrations and mine traps on the itineraries complete these defensive procedures.

In its deep actions conducted outside the delta or in any other action than the limited objective raids, the Mobile Group is very seldom isolated. It is always part of an ensemble of forces: other Mobile Groups, armor units, general reserve elements.

Either limited to its organic resources or reinforced, the Mobile Group is essentially one of the items of the maneuver; its action can be either closely connected to the other units' action or relatively independent and connected only by correlation in time and space.

This feature of the Mobile Group has a deep influence on its own combat methods.

When acting independently, if the enemy is powerful, the Mobile Group progresses cautiously, in close formation, advancing by bounds from objective to objective. It will secure the holding of the important terrain points to anchor its action, ascertain the security of its flanks and of its line of communication, as well as that of its artillery which must always be supported by the infantry.

The head echelons that open the way, progress by echelon: echelon of movement, echelon of support, their flanks covered by detachments solidly constituted (mobile or fixed flank guards). They must always have artillery support.

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For the security of the line of communications, particularly if it is going to serve as return itinerary, the Commander of the M.G. shall have it controlled by elements left behind in a certain number of carefully chosen positions: heights, inevitable crossing points, etc. In the course of its progression, the M.G. gets weaker because of these elements that it leaves behind. Also, the supplementary elements (battalions, armor units, etc.) which were assigned to it must well be taken into account regarding the exact distance to cover, the nature of the terrain and the possible strength of the eventual enemy interventions.

When contact with the enemy elements is established, the M.G. Commander endeavors to stop them and maneuver them by the flanks and rear. He organizes and executes envelopment operations, either improvised or prepared in advance on the intelligence at his disposal and in accordance with the terrain. These operations must be very rapid and well covered on the flanks, since the adversary is particularly fluid and the fixing actions are not very efficient in terrains which accidented and covered nature permit concealment.

On the contrary, if the enemy is small in numbers and strong reactions on its part is not to be expected, the M.G. can widely maneuver, articulating its battalions in rake so to sweep and search the terrain and send the adversary back in a given direction or towards an area where it can be encircled and destroyed.

The job of ascertaining the security of the flanks passes then to the battalions, which will operate more independently and with more flexibility: they are the ones which change places in close formation. If their daily supply and their evacuations can be supported from the air (parachute drops and helicopters), then they are not bound to protect their line of communications. This kind of job, though would soon exhaust their resources.

The M.G. Commander handles its battalions, fixes their axis, their objectives and their tempo, coordinating their efforts and keeping always ready to support them with artillery or air force.

He must ascertain close security for his batteries and his Post of Command by the reserve elements.

EMPLOY OF ARMS OTHER THAN INFANTRY

- Employ of the M.G. artillery

The M.G. artillery action is the more efficient the more rapid, brutal and massive it is. The fugacity of the targets and their dilution in the covered terrain impose a method of fire against the personnel which can instantaneously cover large areas with sufficient density. Whenever possible, it must be group fire conducted by a P.C.T.

This demands a certain juxtaposition of batteries, perfect signal means, and a strict fire discipline. Fire against personnel must be brief, maximum 2 or 3 minutes, but at maximum rate. In fact, only the

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first volley is effective, so its density must be adequate and its aim exact. In the delta, the complete absence of relieve makes the M.G. artillery closely tributary to the reconnaissance aviation. When it can dispose of reconnaissance aircraft its efficiency increases in the proportion of 1 to 5.

The observation and liaison detachments of the battalions see only a small part of the targets; lost in the tangle of the villages, they must be very careful to mark the advance of the forward infantry elements to indicate their positions to the batteries.

For any rather hard operation, one must foresee sufficient allowance of "cricket" missions, so the air reconnaissance can be permanent during the entire critical phase. The allowance in flight hours will be compensated in ammunition savings and positive tactical results. When the fire is with the purpose of neutralizing a target (wooded edges of a village, for instance), it is adjusted by the classical methods. After the fire for effect, one stops the fire for a few minutes and then is resumed to bracket the defenders who, thinking that the preparation is completed, go back to their combat places.

These method which leaves the Viet Minh in doubt as to the completion of the preparation, extends the duration of its neutralization. It permits the infantry to more easily approach the objective, the security distance (assaulting distance) being always too long to be covered by the lead elements moreover because of flooded terrain and abundance of canals and hedges.

Against personnel in the open (dispersed enemy elements trying to escape into the vegetation from the paddy-fields), the use of position flares is particularly effective. However, the use of such rockets must be avoided in the Mountain Region and particularly on wooded terrain.

The importance attributed to the artillery by the enemy, imposes on the M.G. Commander the obligation to particularly watch its security. Batteries must be protected day and night, especially at night, by the infantry support, the enemy having a tendency to try to carry them away by storm, if considered poorly defended, and to neutralize them by concentration of mortars.

To fight the mortars is a normal artillery mission. It is an easy task when the combined intelligence from several observations (OLF) permits to situate the pieces with adequate precision. In defensive combat outside the delta, the artillery organization must be thorough and complete.

2 - Employ of armor element adapted to the M.G.

This armor element has an essential mission to open the routes and protect movements, particularly when the M.G. travels by truck.

The minimum is a platoon of 3 M.24 and 2 H.T. Unable to split in 2 patrols, the platoon can operate with one axis only, which limits the rapid displacement of the M.G. also limiting its flexibility and radius. (1 Platoon of 5 SHAFFEE and 4 H.Ts, or 2 platoons of 3 SHAFFEE

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or 2 H.Ts would yield more possibilities in this direction).

The armor element has a considerable fire power which allows it to constitute an effective fire base to support infantry action, particularly for the approaches of village vegetation edges. It is the most rapid maneuver element at the disposal of the M.G. Commander; it permits to cover the attack flanks and to interdict certain open terrains to the enemy. Sometimes its is the equivalent to a supplementary battalion.

Although capable of moving along the flooded paddy-fields (practically the SHAFTEE can pass wherever a man can go without sinking in the mud above the ankle), the more favorable terrain is the dry paddy-fields, the graveyards, the gardens and the plantations. In covered terrain, one must reinforce the platoon support groups, with footmen armed with pistol-machineguns, grenades and rifle grenades. These men can travel in the rear platform of the tanks.

By night, the armor element must take a position inside the infantry formation. It participates to the fire plans with its side weapons and its protection group. In appropriate terrain, it retains some possibilities of action in short-term night offensives, carried out away from roads usually mined, on axis of attack well-recognized and well-marked. These actions always produce surprise. When well prepared and rapidly executed, they are not risky.

The armor element adapted to the M.G. normally do not have the means to carry out by themselves offensive distant actions. They require:

- several tank platoons
- motorized infantry
- curved fire elements (mortars on half-tracks or howitzer M.8)

3 - Employ of amphibious elements adapted to the M.G.

For the operation in aquatic areas, sometimes one favors the adaptation of the amphibious elements to the Mobile Group:

- either as light reconnaissance or liaison elements (crabs)
- or as fire support elements in flooded terrain (alligators).

The "crabs" are rapid (practically they are the only ones capable to catch up the Viet Minh in the paddy-fields), but they are not combat vehicles. They are fragile, poor swimmers, and the negotiation of culverts and brooks presents for them unsurmountable difficulties. The M.G. Commander must use them mainly as liaison and reconnaissance elements, or for day blocking.

The alligators (L.V.T.) are slower, cumbersome and weakly armored on the flanks. But their fire power is considerable. Transporting infantry units, they can support the attack of the village edges in flooded terrains and when the tanks are non operative; designed especially for the execution of bridgeheads in the sea landing operations, they are poorly fitted to cross canals with steep banks and high breakwaters.

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Crabs and alligators are fragile equipment which should particularly be managed and solely employed in favorable terrains. One must avoid to overload them and every three days they require 36 hours of maintenance.

4 - Linkage and operation of the M.G. signal elements

The entire efficiency of the M.G. maneuvers depends on the rapid and without failure of the signal means.

The equipment is mostly radiophonic for direct conversation from commander to commander, or officer to officer in the lowest level.

One does not resort to the telegraph, except for non operational coded messages, and only when weather conditions do not permit phone communications and never in critical periods.

The equipment is composed of:

1. Forward radiophonic network (Posts 193, ANGRC 9 or 694) relaying:

M.G. Commander to its	(battalions, armor element
maneuver elements	(Miscellaneous detachments (amphibious)
2. Two rear radiophonic networks (193 or 399) (One of the specifically G2 and Logistics), relaying:

M.G. Commander to	(Operational Command
	(Other M.G.
	(Sector Commander
3. One Artillery Command (193) liaison post to post with the P.C.T. if the latter is not juxtaposed to the M.G. Post of Command, and the artillery operational command post, if any.
4. One Artillery listening post of the OLP network and batteries on posts 508 and 608.
5. One air liaison support including:
 - One conversation post with "Cricket" (post 508)
 - One VHF post for liaison with the fighters, bombers or transport aircraft.
6. One rear radiophonic or radiographic network with the M.G. base for non operational liaisons (post 193 or 399)

Each one of these networks operates as a controlled network. There must be alternate posts planned for cases of breakdown. All posts are mounted on vehicles for all terrains, whenever possible (H.T. or DODGE 4/4).

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For their proper operation, efficiency and rapid command, these networks require that the operators make use of:

- a conversation code
- a conventional name for terrain and units
- a code for coordinates

To be excluded are the C.C.C. codes, slidex or coding machines designed for messages, because they are a source of errors and delays.

The basis for a good operations of the M.G. signal elements is: stric discipline of methods, thorough technical preparation of the personnel and frequent shifting of operators.

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THOROUGH ORGANIZATION OF FORTIFIED VIET MINH DELTA VILLAGES

Abstract from a lecture delivered at
a Course for Officers of the Vietnamese
Army

..... The object of the village fortification in the deltas is:

- either to prepare in advance for the fight within the villages, in order to attract there the battle against our small units,
- or to shelter our Cadres, troops, and the Viet Minh population with their belongings, in such a way as to permit a life protected against enemy surprises and raids, and permitting to go out for ambushes and attacks to small posts, after a careful and thorough preparation; this allows the Viet Minh to observe its tactics of annihilation, based on the surprise and rapid concentration of resources superior to the patrol or small posts attacked.

The fortified village can play a role of point of support, but its mission is equally accomplished:

- if, thanks to its internal organization, annihilation attacks can be carried out against forward detachments,
- if the Viet Minh troops anchored there, intent to cause us the maximum losses, find the way to conceal their presence there until our departure,
- if these troops, after fighting a delaying action, find the way to escape during the night, in spite of our occupation.

The double mission of annihilation and protection of the Viet Minh units in their bases, leads to solutions which counteract either both objects or only one of them.

These solutions are:

- distant security,

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- a terrain organization and a cover formation designed to slow our march of approach for the purpose of being able to situate our protection and counter-attack elements.
- a village organization allowing the preparation of annihilation counter-attacks against our tip elements and even our main element if considered too weak or too daring,
- a village organization designed to shelter our troops, the population and their property
 - against the aircraft
 - against the tank raids
 - against our infantry infiltrated in the village.

DISTANT SECURITY

The mop up operations so feared by the Viet Minh are the product of:

- either the garrison of our posts and their daily reconnaissance,
- or the general reserve, for big blocking operations.

The enemy takes protection against the first, by having agents in the villages where our posts are situated. Against the second, it has a network of watchers on elevated points and near the road axis. (1)

Note (1) - In its activity program for April 1952, the Delegation of Region X, gave the following orders:
- resist against mop up operations, maintain secrecy, eliminate spies, intercept the enemy before it reaches the village.
- organize the alert service to protect the population, organize in military fashion the provisory evacuation, the guerrillas, under the direction of the regional troops, must attack isolated to make difficult the movement of the enemy.

In both cases, the transmission of intelligence is very rapid, and the sound of warning is immediate which many times implies the mobilization of the guerrilla men, who otherwise linger in their farming occupations.

This watch and alert system is not valid if the fortified village is near the post or within an important axis.

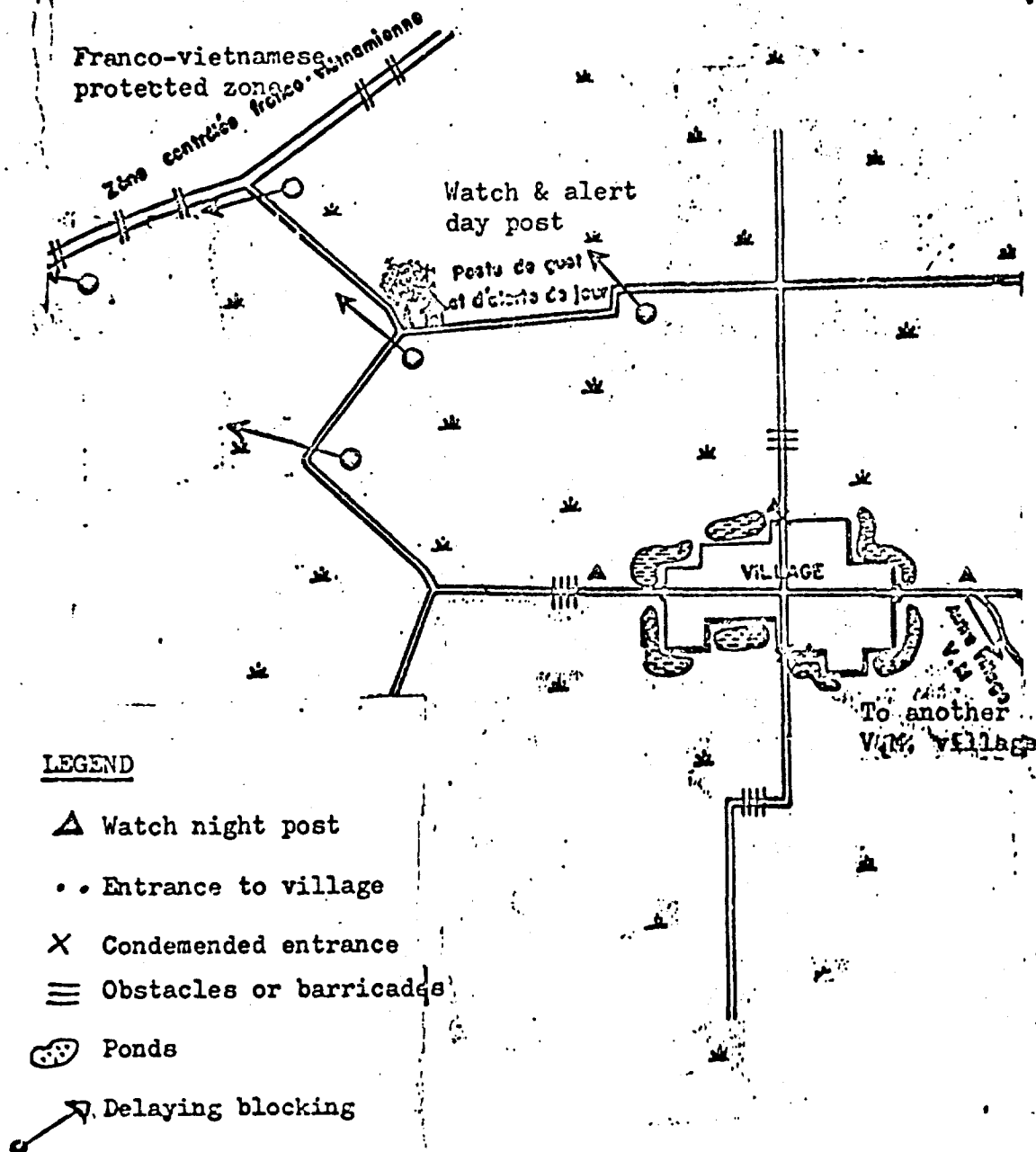
This leads the Viet Minh to seriously organize only the villages at a distant from posts or axis, in the middle of areas of difficult acces, or under the protection of a belt of so-called "floating" villages, theoretically under our control and whose only mission is to sound the alert.

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THE FORTIFIED VILLAGE

(DISTANT PROTECTION)



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DELAYING OF OUR APPROACH MARCH

It can be:

- either passive, though destruction aiming to delay the infantry (breakage of dams, floods, etc.)
- or active, by means of traps or mines, action of three or four snipers who withdraw after having delayed for a while our head elements.

The apparition of the tanks in the delta has caused a certain upheaval to the Viet Minh tactics. The irruption of the tanks during the dry season through the paddy-fields, has created great surprise. Breakage of dams is not always possible because of the risk of catastrophic floods. Barricades are easily negotiable by the tanks.

Absolute tranquility is not resumed until the rainy season comes. But, recently, the Viet Minh has introduced a tactics of narrowing the dam-roads passable for tanks, a practice which without creating the risk of dam breaks and flooding, stops the passage of the tanks. Formerly the width of these dam-roads was sufficient for passage, but now has been reduced to less than the tanks wheelbase, by scattering the sides of the roads over the side fields in stretches of five meters each.

DEFENSE OF THE VILLAGE APPROACHES

All chance of tactical surprise eliminated, both because the advance of our troops has been disclosed or delayed, our first echelons arrive only to the edges of the village.

There, the defense work built up, although well-concealed to land or air view, constitutes a true fortification.

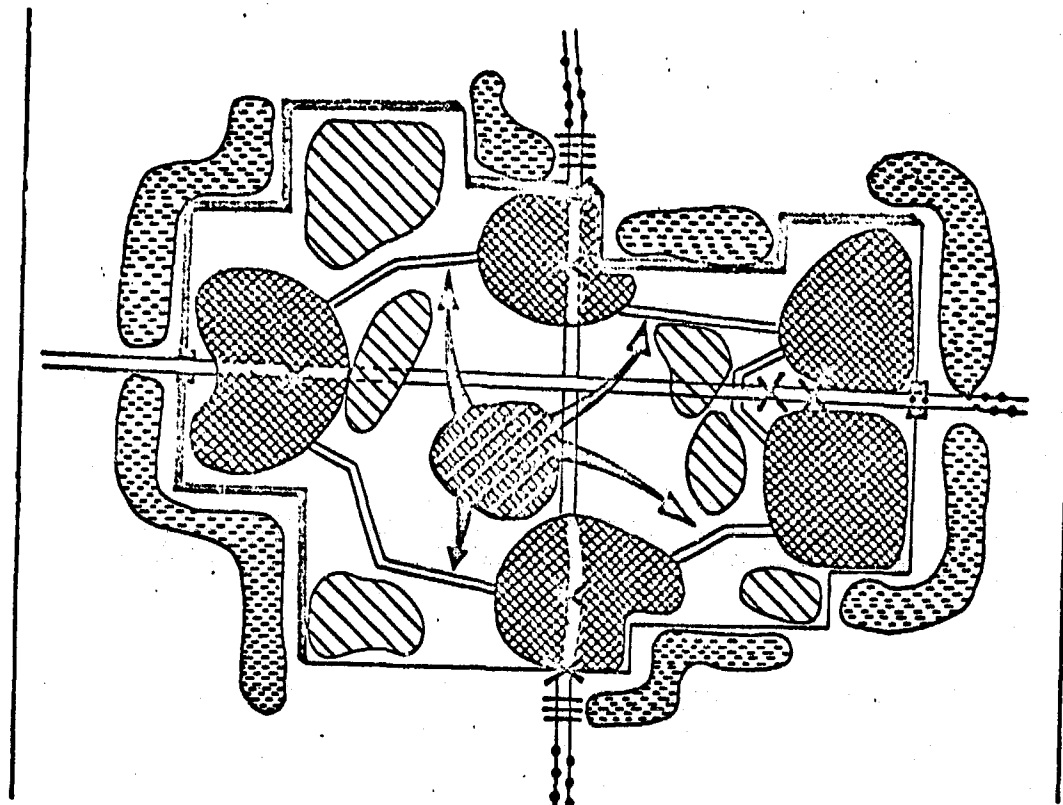
The village:

- is encircled by a belt of ponds or water-filled moats, or even by a diverted course of a stream,
- has limited the entrances to one or two, surmounted by a tower with a wide fire field for automatic arms, besides the fact that the village itself raises about two meters from the level of the paddy-fields,
- has cleared out the approaches demolishing some farm houses and sacrificing corn and tobacco plantations,
- has planted a living, thick, bamboo hedge,
- has organized, under inextricable vegetation and bamboo clumps, a continuous network of trenches with aiming slits for individual or collective arms, while the combatants remain protected against most of the infantry assaults.









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THE FORTIFIED VILLAGE (INTERNAL ORGANIZATION)



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|------------------|
|  | Active counter-attack |  | Counter-attack |
|  | hamlets resistance |  | Entrance portico |
|  | Passive hamlet (shaded area) |  | Barricade |
|  | Pond |  | Mine |

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The disposition of the village edges (from which the enemy only opens fire when our elements, deeply committed, has almost established contact, sometimes no more than 20 meters away) presents one of the more difficult tactical problems to solve without losses at the delta.

ORGANIZATION OF THE VILLAGE IN VIEW TO THE ANNIHILATION BATTLE

The external cover of the village being recessed in one or several points, gives the enemy the opportunity of annihilating our first daring elements, when they irrupt into the position.

The internal compartmentation has been well studied. The conglomeration is cut into islands of resistance, some passive, other active.

PASSIVE ISLANDS

They are designed to cause individual casualties, but mainly to disperse our elements or to attract them slowly toward the active islands.

The passive islands are strewn with traps and mines with a display of the entire Viet Minh imagination: doors and benches with grenade traps, pathways and their acces variously mined, pits with bamboo stakes, harassment by snipers from the top of the houses, etc.

ACTIVE ISLANDS

Even after the passive islands have been searched and cleared of mines and traps one by one and with circumspection, one of our groups will be drawn towards a slected island, organized for annihilation, usually called "point of ferocious combat".

This point will have assembled the garrison from the village edges, through not mined pathways or subterranean secret passages. The friendly group falls into a kind of within-the-village ambush, where it finds itself all of a sudden attacked from all sides at pont-blank fire, by an adversary brutally unleashed, firing at enfilade from invisible portholes in the brick houses or from subterranean hide-outs never discovered. The fate of the group can be decided in a few moments by an enemy who disappears as soon as the assault is completed if no supporting friendly element comes to its aid. (1))

Note (1) Deriving a lesson from a mop up operation, the provincial Commander of Y....., issued, in May 1952, the following instructions to his district Companies:

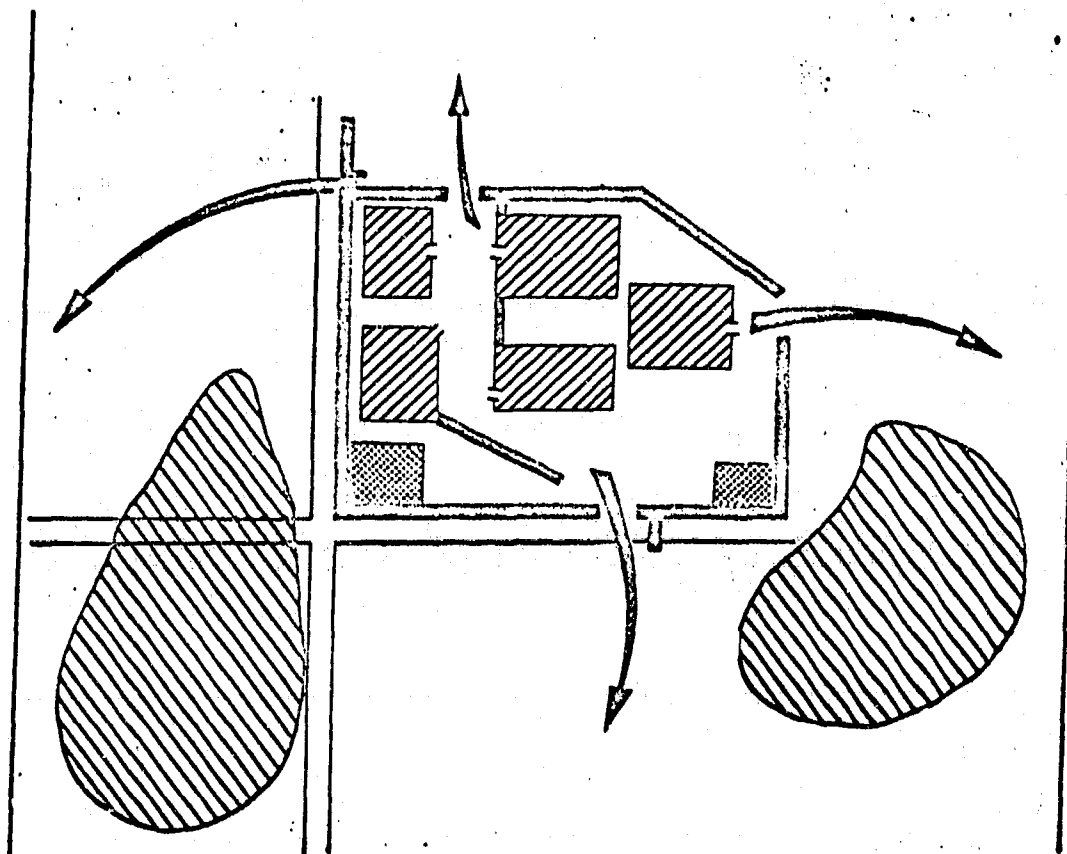
"If the enemy enters a village, attack with determination and do not go back to the underground passages until after a while.

Even if the enemy is strong in numbers, one must attack and then withdraw to terrains which shall not be abandoned till night comes, to look for another opportunity of attack.


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RESISTANCE & COUNTER - ATTACK HAMLET




LEGEND

 Shelter for counter-attack elements

 Blockhaus designed to immobilize the F-V troops

 Traps area

 Village partitioning wall

 Counter-attack

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VILLAGE ORGANIZATION FOR PROTECTION PURPOSES

The organized mission of the Viet Minh village protection consists in putting under cover:

- the friendly populations
- their property
- the troops
- their arms and ammunition

against:

- our air or ground intelligence action
- our air attacks
- our ground action of attack and occupation.

A. Protection of the population and property

Distant security permits the Viet Minh to rapidly organize at the slightest menace of danger, the evacuation of the non-combatant civilians, although some of them, youngsters and women, are often mobilized for the defense of the village. A plan of evacuation of people and cattle is always ready, subject to the variations imposed by our axis of attack.

The provisions, particularly the rice stocks are always well-concealed in advance, forbidding storages of more than 20 tons.

B. Protection against our intelligence action

The troops protect themselves against our agents by a very close compartmentation by cells, one not knowing most of the time the work done by the other, and by means of a very rigid control of the CONG-AN. A number of our emissaries, often tricked because of lack of caution, who one day disappear or who turn against us without even noticing it.

Protection against air reconnaissance is obtained by the utilization of the existing vegetation or even by planting thickets of bamboo which camouflage the organisation of the edges.

Only the analysis of the air photographs by specialists permits sometimes, through a small detail, detect the trace of a suspect organization.

C. Protection against our fire

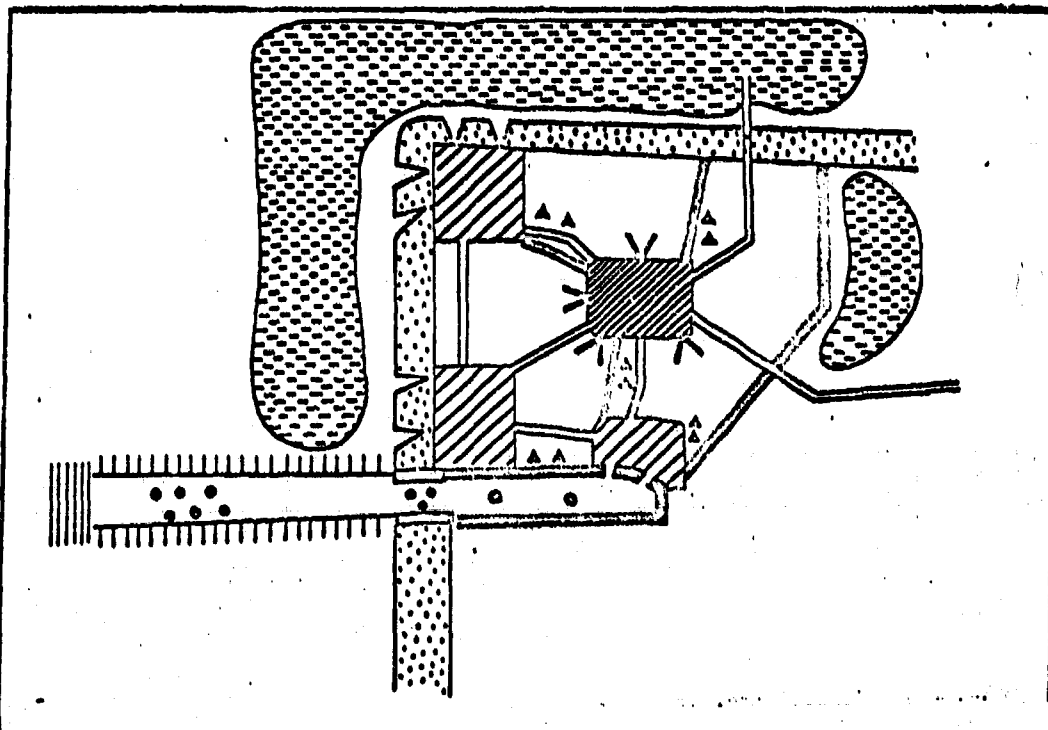
The protection against our air attacks has changed in accordance with the power of fire. Napalm use is effectively neutralized by underground organization protected by lids of green bamboo practically non combustible.

The edge of wood trenches, with dug-outs, put the troops under cover against the 105.

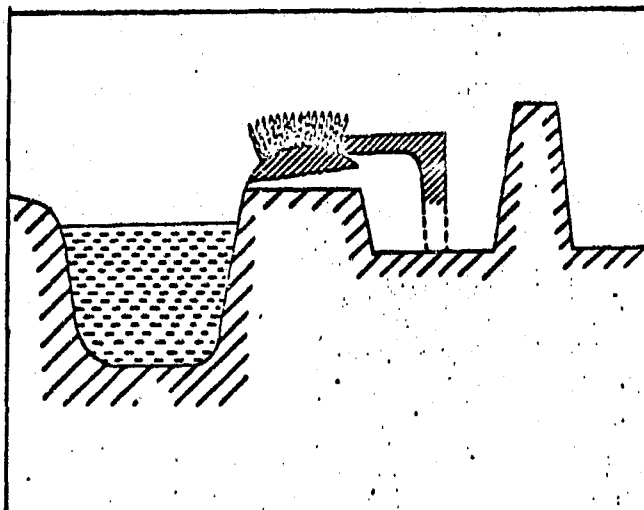
Only the big bombs dropped by the B.26 and the shells from the 155 can expect an effective destruction; the other weapons, including napalm and the 105, can only obtain a neutralizing effect.

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





FIXED RESISTENCE HAMLET



Cross-section of edge defense

LEGEND

-  Pond
-  Slope with bamboo hedge
-  Partitioning wall (2m50)
-  Communication trench
-  Blockhaus (dirt & round logs)
-  Remote control mine

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Against the 155 and the big bombs, the Viet Minh has not yet found any protection than the improvised shelters for its troops, not in the village itself but outside, nearby, in the banks and damps 100 to 200 meters away from the center of the village taken as target.

Against the tank irruption, the protection is mainly passive. The use of anti-vehicle mines is reserved for the obligatory roads of acces, and for the dam-roads, but the dry paddy-fields permit the tanks to reach the belt of ponds encircling the conglomeration. So, the tanks can never practically penetrate the village itself, because of the narrow pathways.

D. Protection against our occupation

Against searching parties, the ingenuity of the Viet Minh is equally fertile. The underground caves and passages are innumerable, completely watertight, and with entrances very well-camouflaged. They contain supplies for two or three days at least, and means of ventilation quite adequate. They are even organized for the defense in case they are discovered. By means of a mine exploding at the tip of a bamboo cane, a group has been seen to escape from a discovered underground hide-out, shooting their way out, profitting of a temporary overlook of the assailants. (1)

Note (1) Proffiting from the experience of a period of infiltration of several months, two Commanders of Provincial Troops, in 1952, issued the following recommendations regarding underground hide-outs:

"Underground hide-outs must be dug wide to permit leg relaxation, and one must allow the entrance of light to ease the eyes upon coming out to full day light. They must have observation portholes, and slits for firing.

Once the underground covers are dug out, the Cadres must inspect them, to correct negligences. The lids must be light in weight and easy to lift up.

One must provide them with water, to fight fire and fumes. A system of conventional signs must be agreed with the owner of the house above, to be used to know that no enemy is in sight, before coming out.

If the enemy discovers the underground and appears at the entrance, keep calm, throw hand-grenades to the outside and prolong the combat at the entrance of the subterranean until dusk then you will be able to escape.".....

An incident occurred recently at X.... shows the effectiveness of an active defense: the enemy, while conducting a mop up operation, discovered an underground hide-out in which 3 men from Company 6 were hiding. These men irrupted out throwing hand-grenades against the discoverers who were digging in with picks, caused their disband and succeeded in escaping. Only one of them was slightly wounded. Since then the enemy is more cautious in excavating for hide-outs.

Before going into the subterranean hide-outs one must carry bamboos or poles 1 to 2 meters long (in accordance with the size of the hide-out and its aeration portholes), to be used

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to stick hand-grenades or pull mines at the tip of them, for the purpose of projecting these explosives through the aeration portholes or the holes excavated by the searching enemy. The explosion will destroy the searching party. And one can profit of this moment to escape.

The communication galleries are defended with a symilar system. One must prolong the combat at every nook of the trench, spare all ressources, and wait until night to withdraw, or to go out to surprise the enemy if there is a chance.

Besides having two entrances, these subterranean hide-outs when provided with communication with one another, they come to constitute a sort of termite labyrinth with openings of escape in open country, far from the besieged village. This permits, either escape by night or a means to organise a counter-attack falling against our rear.....

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VIET MINH TACTICS FOR THE DEFENSE OF DELTA AND OUT OF THE DELTA VILLAGES

Abstracts from a Viet Minh notice (1) dated
1951

.....The reactionary followers are embarrassing for us: we count them among the patriots and their number leads us to underestimate the strength of the enemy; these reactionary followers loot shamefully.

One of the weak points of the enemy is to rush in the direction of the faintest detonation heard, with the hope to capture men and arms.

We have transformed our villages in fortified positions. By day, a severe watch system to which the population participates, allows us to follow the movements of the enemy and to take all the necessary measures for the defense or for the timely evacuation of the population. Then, the regional troops, by attacking the posts often unmanned, can force the enemy to abandon the operation in progress.

During the attack, the guerrillas allow the enemy to get close to their stations, for more effective fire. At the interior of the villages, strong points (ferocious combat points) are often created to secure the annihilation of small detachments. Our D.K. substitute for their shortage of arms, particularly mines and grenades, the play on the enemy's psychology; the latter usually hesitates in front of freshly disturbed earth, branches cut down and left on the ground, and bricks or stones scattered around. Our subterranean hideouts have been greatly improved with ventilation and waterproofing.

In the mountain region, the combats within the fortified villages constitute a chain of ambushes.

Before any combat, the evacuation of the inhabitants of the village is a primary necessity. In order not to be surprised at dawn, it is advisable to undertake the evacuation at 1:00 or 2:00 AM, and in case the enemy should not appear, to have the population back into the village before dawn.

The duty of the guerrillas is at the same time to fight the enemy and to protect the property and the lives of the inhabitants, either by evacuating them or by sheltering them in the pre-arranged hideouts.

(1) These abstracts have been limited to the points not dealt with in the chapter on V.M. village organization in the deltas.

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In the villages where the enemy struggles continuously to install the rebel administration, the fight with arms shall diminish in intensity in certain periods, to spare damages to the population and at the same time to maintain in the village a base to be used in a more favorable occasion.

To diminish fighting activities does not mean to abandon the fight altogether; while we abstain to fight the enemy within the villages we can continue to attack on the roads.

The population must contribute to the guerrilla's fight by providing watching and information, and by supplying provisions to fortification and other positions. When a neighboring village is being attacked, is possible to intervene by yelling and creating all kind of loud noises greatly disturbing the assailant that is suffering heavy losses.

Political work among the guerrillas and propaganda among the population must go hand to hand with the fighting to create the required solidarity.

TACTICS EMPLOYED

IN THE VILLAGE COMBATS

Tactics must vary in accordance with the region involved - mountain, hills, deltas - which characterize themselves by the habitat. There are two general missions: fortification of the villages to fight the enemy, and to fight the enemy to acquire experience for improving said fortifications. This leads us to three methods of combat within the village:

- Sparrow tactics, mines and traps, and underground galleries.

SPARROW TACTICS

It consists in dispersing the combatants in cells armed with rifles and hand grenades, which shall attack the enemy in every occasion particularly in its assumable itinerary of approach.

By employing them concurrently, mines and traps can spare us many losses and allow us to fall back to the village. There, the rifles should be entrusted only to sharp shooters who will protect the fall back route and the arm caches, while drawing the enemy toward the traps and towards narrow passages where it can be easily destroyed by hand grenades.

This tactics can profitably be applied against the enemy on its return way, at night. Thus, the enemy will not dare to prolong the combat until darkness, mindful of a safe fall back.

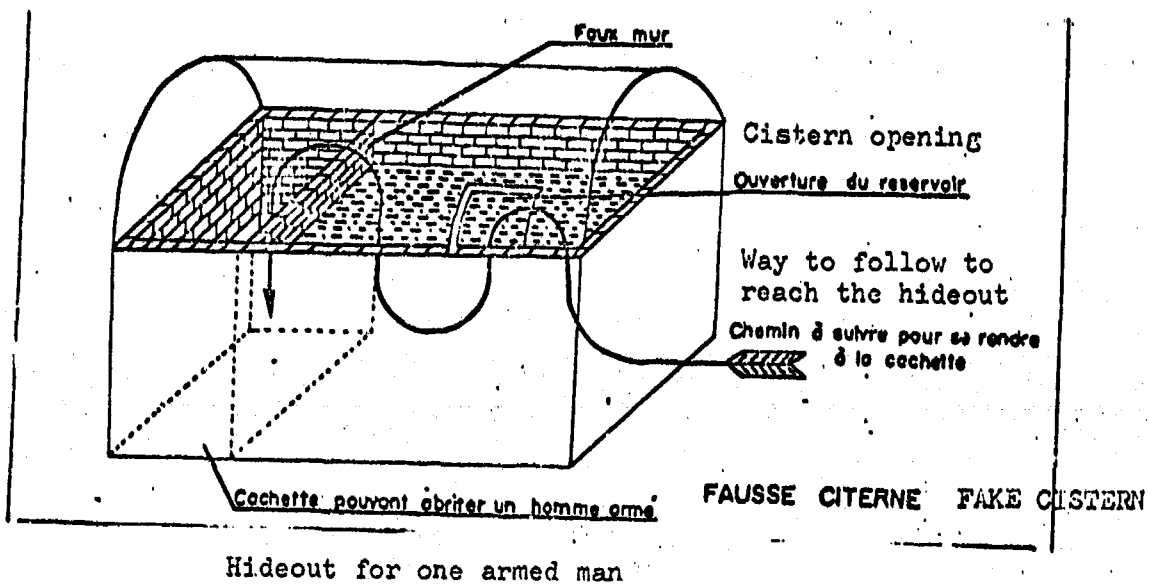
In the village amid flooded paddy-fields, usually there is only a single route of access and so it is easy to cover with traps or to defend. Those escaping into the paddy-fields are easy target.

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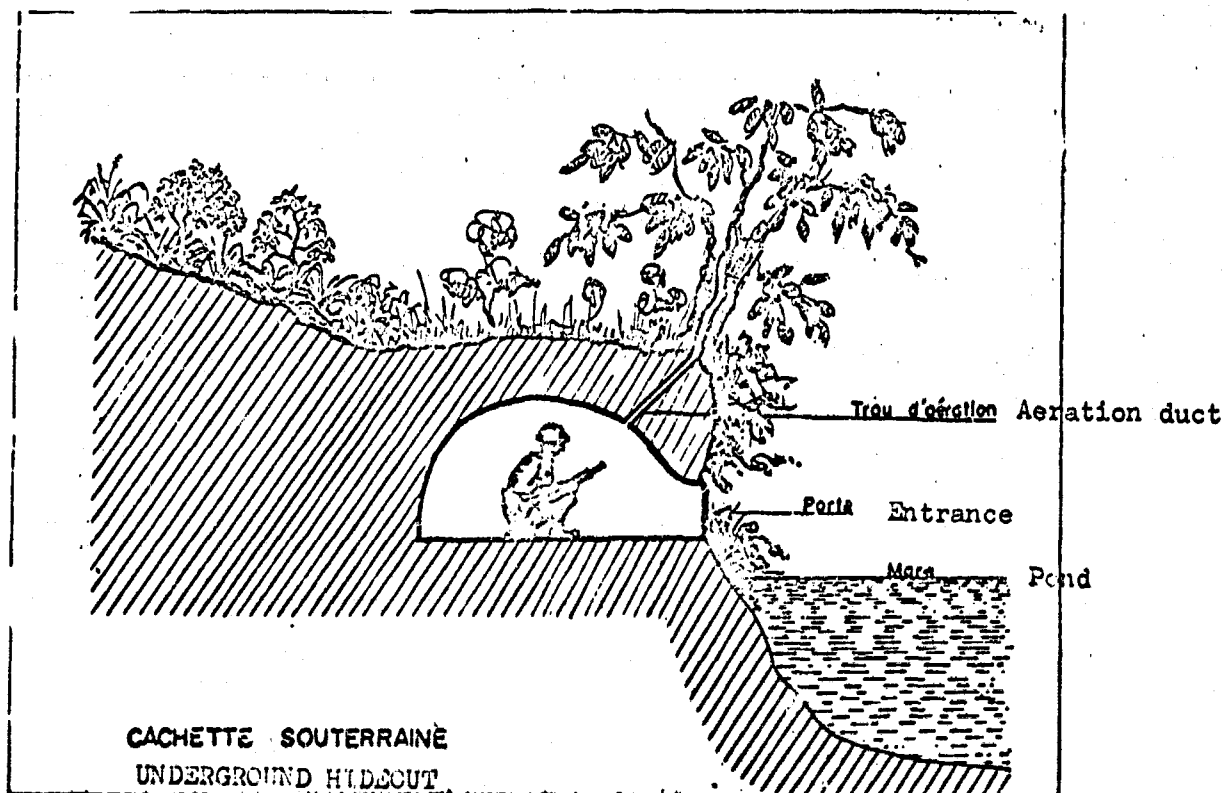
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HIDEOUT AND UNDERGROUND GALLERY

False wall



Hideout for one armed man



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In the mountain regions on the obliged routes, the sparrow tactics can be advantageously combined with the use of mines and deviation maneuvers. The fight will become then the form of successive ambushes or chain ambushes.

MINES & TRAPS

Our wise use of mines and traps is our essential means of village defense. It stops the ardor of the enemy which already has been subjected to the treatment before entering the village and continues to dread it to the point that any irregularity in the ground, or a simple cut branch laying on its way, moves it to be cautious.

The mine is not used alone and everywhere. It is mainly used in view of a subsequent attack or in ambushes. Its planting demands a thorough knowledge of the psychology of the enemy and its possible reactions ; only thus one will be able to have it fall from one trap to another, get demoralized and ultimately destroyed.

After laying a mine no matter where, mine carefully the surrounding spots where the enemy will naturally take refuge after the first explosion; set traps for the enemy equipment which it might have used for the transportation of its wounded men. Also mine the places where it will most probably go for deployment in view of a general attack or partial actions.

Mines and traps are extraordinarily useful to encircle the enemy positions and to diminish its fighting spirit.

TUNNELS OF COMMUNICATION

This is the only means to constantly vary the physiognomy of the combat by facilitating the movement of our combatants and by assuring their security. They permit us to appear unexpectedly and obtain quick results, in spite of sentries, amid the enemy in front of it and its rear, on the roofs or anywhere; thus, a single combattant or a cell can successfully face forces 3 or 4 times superior.

A great danger exists when the enemy encircles the village two or three days, using elements in civilian clothes to carry out searching. In such cases, in order not to succumb we need secret tunnels of communication to escape from the village.

The importance of tunnels of communication vary in accordance with the regions. They are also essential for such services as: command, liaison, movement, attack, defense, mutual aid. In this last respect, one could not sufficiently emphasize the recommendation to local initiative to link several villages by these tunnels of communication.

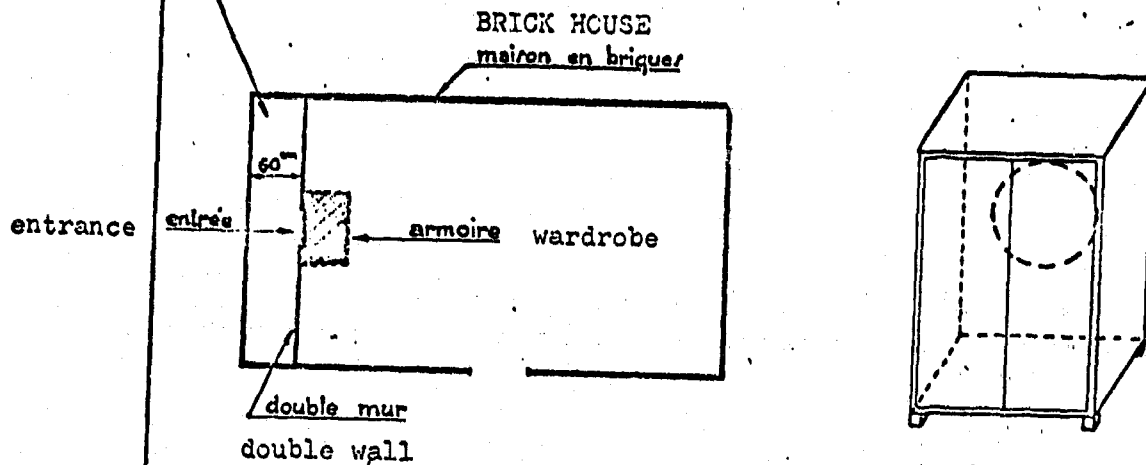
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HIDEOUTS AND UNDERGROUND GALLERIES

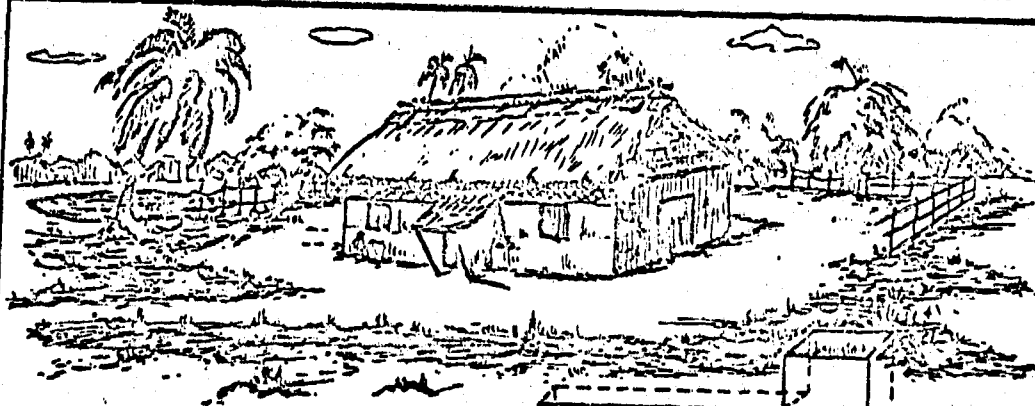
HIDEOUT FOR AN ARMED GROUP

CACHETTE DOUVANT ABRITER UN GROUPE EN ARMES



armoire: il faut la déplacer pour découvrir l'entrée de la cachette

Wardrobe must be removed to discover entrance to hideout



SOUTERRAIN À ÉTAGES (NÉCESSITE UN TERRAIN ÉLEVÉ PEU COURANT)

SEVERAL FLOOR HIDEOUT
for ground elevations
(not common)

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AMBUSHES

They can be laid not only outside the villages but inside. In the last case, they are meant only for the destruction of small enemy units and the material and personnel used can be minimum. Its success depends on a good distribution of the personnel and on sure ways of retreat.

There are two possible kinds of action: combined ambush (mines, traps, sparrow tactics), and underground ambush.

First of all it is necessary to know the enemy's psychology and its mop up methods as previously used. Then one can carefully plan the action and train the guerrilla men.

To draw the enemy toward into our formation one can employ the trick called "lure of the feminine sex". We fire several shots and a woman comes out fleeing. The enemy automatically comes out to pursue her and falls into our trap. Then, in a lightning-like movement, the enemy is annihilated by the use of handgrenades, pistols or knives, and its armament captured.

One must attack the enemy in places where it assembles for rest, attacking first the officers, then the holders of automatic arms, then the lookouts.

The underground ambush consists in digging in advance individual pits well-camouflaged for the guerrillas to take cover and from them jump on the enemy with knives, while other cells explode the mines to intercept the adversary.

To succeed in this kind of combat it is necessary that an adequate training be carried out in advance. It will be made by teams of 6 or 7 men with the mission of annihilating isolated groups. Then the training will be extended to a group of teams for an ambush mission. One shall use the experience acquired in each combat.

FORTIFIED VILLAGES IN THE AREA OCCUPIED BY THE ENEMY

Villages must be fortified to serve as a base for the guerrilla.

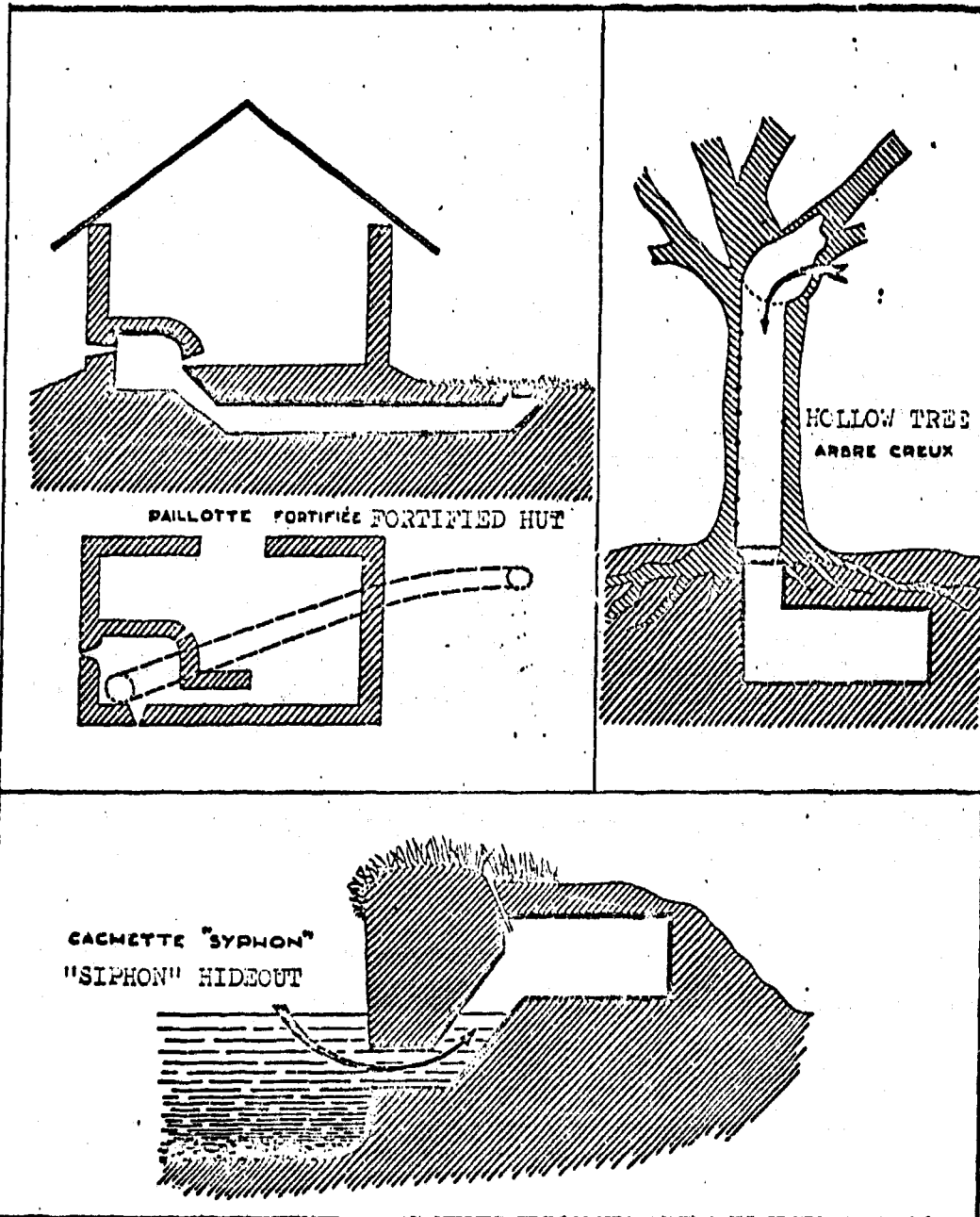
The selection of the base obeys the military situation. We must spread our influence to the villages neighboring the base we choose. We must be able to advance if successful and to withdraw if needed be, to resume the fight at the favorable moment.

The most favorable locations are generally those with three or four villages sufficiently grouped for mutual aid. The critical task is the building of the encircling wall without being observed by the enemy. However, by using hedges of bamboo our villagers can allege as an excuse that they do it for protection against the Viet Minh. Our campaign for fortification must be intensified.

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HIDEOUTS & SUBTERRANEAN GALLERIES



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COMBAT SECTORS IN THE MOUNTAIN REGION

In the mountain regions the villages consist of a few scattered houses. The organization there will then will be limited to shelters to protect the population and its belongings, and to caches in the woods. The trails of acces can be closed in narrow passages by a diversity of obstacles: mines, traps, which can be extended to shady places where the enemy will go to rest.

One can also establish secret trails. In the heights one can prepare huge rocks to be pushed down on the enemy. One can build real blockhaus made of rocks or packed dirt, artillery proof, topped with watch towers and secret communication tunnels underground.

MOBILIZATION OF THE INHABITANTS FOR VILLAGE FORTIFICATION

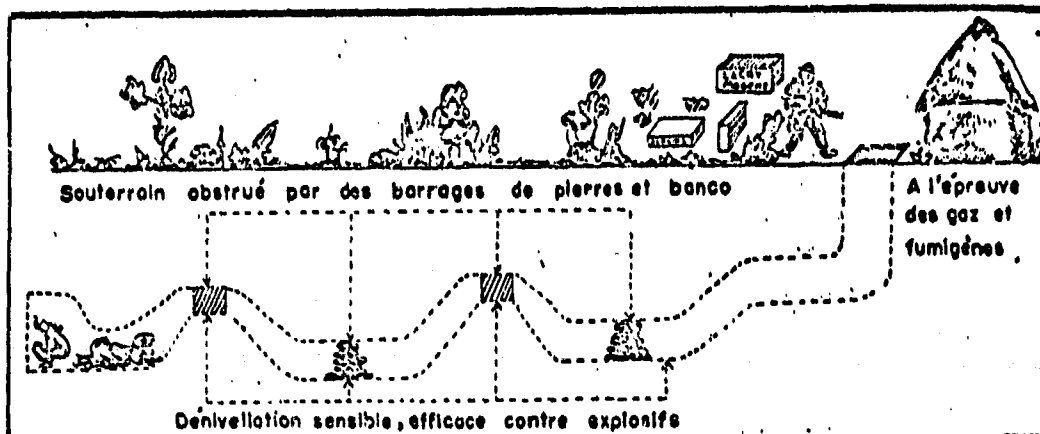
Not only the guerrilla men but the entire population must participate to this task whose importance will have been explained to them in advance. A construction committee will be appointed to act as liaison with the local authorities; this committee shall assign the various tasks.

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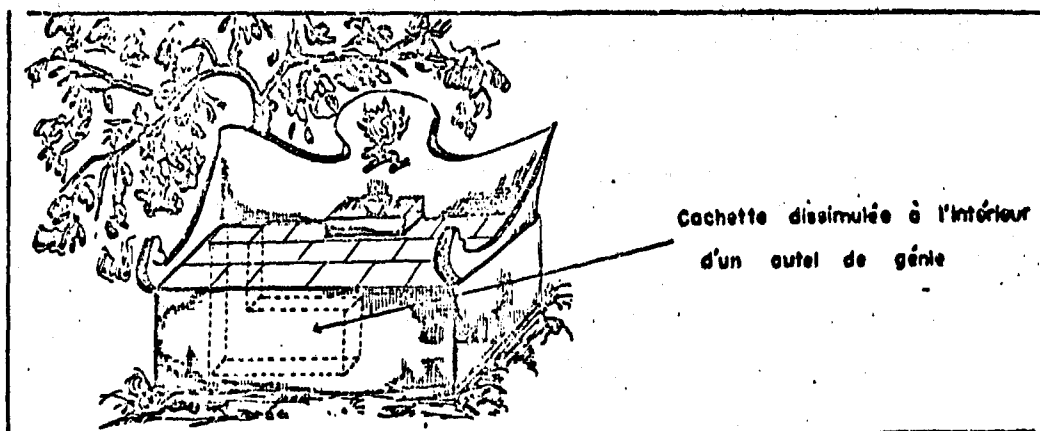
HIDEOUTS & UNDERGROUND GALLERIES

Underground gallery blocked with stones and other obstacles

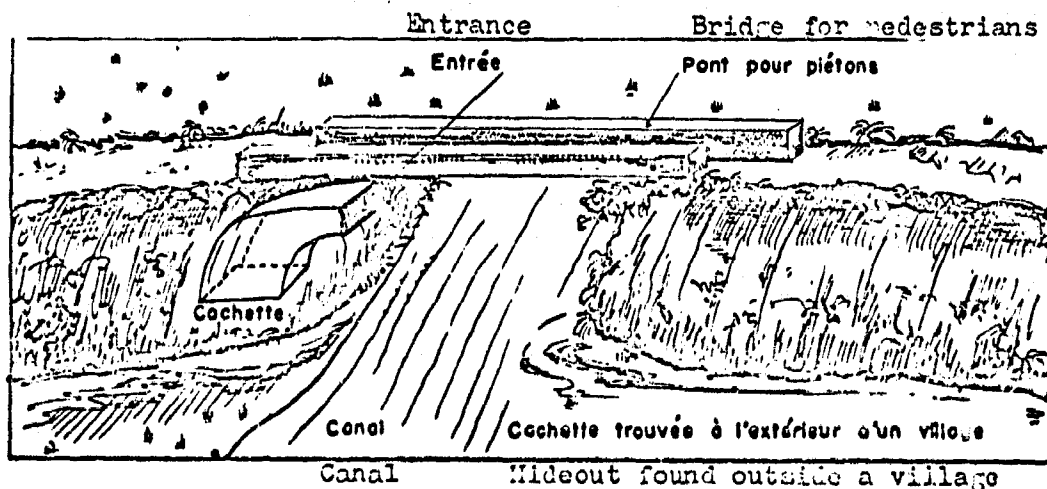


Protected against gas and smoke bombs

Marked difference of levels, effective against explosives



Hideout under an evil spirit altar



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DETAIL METHODS FOR THE ATTACK TO FORTIFIED VILLAGES

From Instructions issued by the General commander of the F.T.N.V., in Summer of 1952 (revised)

.....

General considerations

From the examination of the data gathered by our troops, put up to date, one deduces that a village with a 200 x 300 m of fortifications, cannot be taken by a battalion merely after neutralization by artillery fire.

It is necessary:

- either to increase the infantry strength
- or, preferably, to smash the village by air and 155 shells.

Overall maneuver

1. Positioning of a support-fall back echelon
2. Isolation of the village by protection fire all around the area of danger for the purpose of placing the objective within a closed field
3. Massive envelopment and positioning of cover elements.

If one has tanks and amphibious vehicles at the disposal, then it becomes a normal mission. The infantry can then be concentrated to the attack proper and to mop up; otherwise, one can also use the reserve company for the envelopment.

4. Assault of the village edge in a well-chosen point, with concentration of all fires prior to the start of the attack.
5. Seizure and mop up of an anchor island of sufficient size. From there, one slides along the edges and from island to island up to a methodical occupation of the inner village.

One must keep a sufficient reserve behind the support-fallback echelon.

Fire support

1. The neutralization obtained by the artillery usually permits an easy assault of the edges. But its effectiveness stops at the very moment of the initial progression towards the inner village; security does not allow to keep the artillery fire too close our head elements.

One must then proceed early in the combat to destroy the center of the village, a task which only the 155s and the air bombing can accomplish.

- 2. Each intervention of the aircraft for the purpose of neutralizing and destroying the defense organization of the village, shall make easier any successive action provided it is complemented with:

- first of all, anti-personnel bombs
- then, large bombs in a maximum density, with delay fuze
- finally, napalm.

3. Often it is advisable to suspend the artillery softening (fake departure of the assailant) and resume it a few moments later against the edges which the enemy will have evidently re-occupied.

Fighting within the village

Inside the village the combat must be methodically conducted, following the rules of "village combat" to avoid the disconnection of the units tending to engage into this particular form of combat.

In most of the TONKIN villages, which do not have a main street or a very definite layout, it is difficult to distribute in advance (on a map or even on aerial photos) the objective sectors among the assigned units.

Advance must then be controled very strictly by the Commander, from island to island, not launching ever the next assault without positioning first on the heights of the mopped up area, a fire and surveillance element ("Wer die Höhe hält, hält die Strasse" - Who holds the heights holds the street.)

The combat takes on three forms:

- normal action at ground level
- neutralization and utilization of the heights
- search and mop up or underground galleries.

One must organize specialized teams, armed and equipped to act on these three plans:

- assault teams (riflemen) armed basically with P.M. and a good supply of hand-grenades, smoke- and incendiary-bombs; aided by flame-throwers and by pioneers with tools and dynamite.

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- support teams, trained to utilize the heights (riflemen with machineguns, first class shooters and hand-grenade handlers, equipped with ladders, ropes and grappling-hooks).
- mop up teams and underground demolishers (engineers, grenade handlers and flame-thrower servers) en pioneers equipped with tools and explosives.

Command and Signal posts

The commander of the attack cannot conduct the overall maneuver without keeping its post of command at the outskirts of the village target.

To assure the connection between the commander and the heads of the Sections, the headquarters of the attacking companies must not engage in combat inside the village.

Units front

The attack to a village implies maneuvering and therefore a great articulation in depth, also reserves, particularly if one is facing an enemy of recognized potential. We must go back to the regulation unit fronts:

- zone of action - battalion : 1500 meters average
attack front : 500 meters approximatively.

Tempo of the operations

The enemy strives, and sometimes succeeds thanks to the villages, to fight a "day's end combat", which the arrival of night will not permit us to conclude. This puts in a difficult situation those fragments of unit venturing inside the village beyond the mopped up islands.

Then it is necessary:

- to leave the enemy in the vicinity of the line which could probably be reached in the afternoon, by varying the jump-off time and the methods of advance
- to accept stopping the advance around 17:00 and then plan the set up, when night falls, of a security and ambush formation to blockade the village.

NOTE FROM THE E.M.I.F.T.

Following the 1953-54 operations during the Winter in the Delta, the technique of the underground searching inside the villages has been systematized in a note which main points follow:

.....

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.....The searchings in a village with underground galleries cannot be entrusted to anyone troop. This delicate task, for perfect accomplishment, demands knowledge, method, and training which only specialized teams created for this purpose can possess. The height of the African or North-African soldier makes him unsuitable to go through the entrances of the narrow underground galleries, without employing some time enlarging them. Only the short and thin Vietnamese can enter them.

But the teams, can be mixed with Vietnamese, Africans and Algerians, the mission of the last two being that of covering the searchers and keeping the prisoners.

Searching teams must be composed of an Officer and about 30 men, distributed in cells of 5 men each, two or three of which conduct the searching proper, and the rest contribute to security and the transport of the explosives, etc.

Equipment and materials needed

Defensive grenade are ineffective.

Offensive grenades are effective in small hideouts, but they must not be used except in tight situations, because the Viet Minh made prisoners then cannot talk until after two hours because of the fumes inhaled, which means loss of time in obtaining information.

Explosives are very effective. They permit to "aerate" a hideout too long. But, if the hideout is occupied, the V.M. are killed and one does not get any information.

Tear-gas is very effective if employed in a subterranean no longer than 20 meters. The prisoners are easily captured. The only inconvenience: the searching that follows are very difficult because of the remaining gas and the documents seized are illegible one hour later, after having kept them aerated intermittently.

The smoke- or phosphor grenades grenades are effective since they help to discover the yet undiscovered aeration portholes and hideout exits.

Another inconvenience is like the persistence of fumes of the tear-gas grenade, although it is less durable.

Of course, one must take care to create ventilation portholes to force the smoke out.

Persuasion is the best weapon. It must be made with a combination of threats and promises, by shrewd interpreters or vietnamese soldiers.

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Village searching method

- Close all village exits and watch the spots susceptible of constituting exits not yet discovered,
- Set watchers inside the village, at the cross-roads, so they can sound the alarm in case of irruption of V.M. troops, and at the same time protect the searching teams.

As soon as one or various hideout exits are discovered:

1. Have the hideout searched and reconnoitered by sending down one civilian followed by 2 soldiers.
2. When one branch of the hideout has been reconnoitered, one of the soldiers comes up to report and goes down again with a charge of explosives which is placed at the junction of the galleries; the civilian and the 2 soldiers come out and then the charge is detonated.
3. If there is no junction after 20 meters of gallery, then the hideout is aerated by creating an opening with explosives.

Precautions to observe:

- Evacuate the gallery and branches reconnoitered before the explosion of the charge. At X..... a soldier posted at the entrance of a gallery 200 meters away from the explosion, was heavily shaken: the underground gallery was at least 200 meters long.
- Forbid any gathering of friendly troops near the discovered exits: this delays the searching, because the searching party is concerned for the security poorly assured.

Rebel reactions to our searching

The Viet Minh has built at M..... and at N real subterranean labyrinths 300 meter long, with all kinds of facilities: rest rooms, arms and ammunition deposits, storage of food and medicines, all underground. Water reservoirs allow even in certain parts to create in the hideouts protection walls against tear and smoke bombs.

These underground works are not mere provisional hideouts, but true underground facilities where the Viet Minh can live several days and defend itself against searching, even against our most effective means, the smoke and tear bombs.

The Viet Minh, even underground, is not by any means invulnerable. If they have perfected the defense system, we can perfect our search and destruction methods. The only way to fight this underground war is by well-trained teams. After 5 hours of siege, one team at X... succeeded in unearthing a recalcitrant group and capturing all arms.

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NECESSARY FIRE SUPPORT FOR THE ATTACK TO FORTIFIED VILLAGES

Abstract of Instructions issued on October 1, 1952

by the General Command of the F.T.N.V.

.....The attack to a fortified village imposes the application of aircraft and artillery coordinated fire.

The air force provides, on the one hand, the shock effect (1) through its massive and powerful bombing and, on the other hand, the attacks with napalm. But if napalm and strafing can be used close to the enemy, the bombing requires considerable security distance.

The artillery, whose security distance is between that of the air bomb and the napalm, intervenes to maintain neutralization, while the infantry advances, within the distance of security between air-bombing and the objective.

Considering the security distances to be observed, our limited resources and the fact that the artillery has no possibility to operate during the aircraft interventions, the development of fire support for the attack to a fortified village can, consequently, demand the subsequent application of fire in the following order (2):

1. Powerful shock action

By means of intervention of bombers or fighter-bombers carrying large bombs (260 lbs or 50 kgs) causing at least partial destruction, followed by a neutralization effect of an undefined duration.

2. Intervention of the artillery (155s) adding to the destruction, prolonging the shock effect caused by the air bombing and permitting the approach to a certain distance of the edges.

3. Field artillery neutralization (105s) permitting a closer approach to the edges, so putting the infantry at an assault distance.

4. Eventual secondary shock action with napalm at the moment the infantrymen reach the edges, together with strafing action, if needed.

(1) Instantaneous effect, although followed by some neutralization persistence.

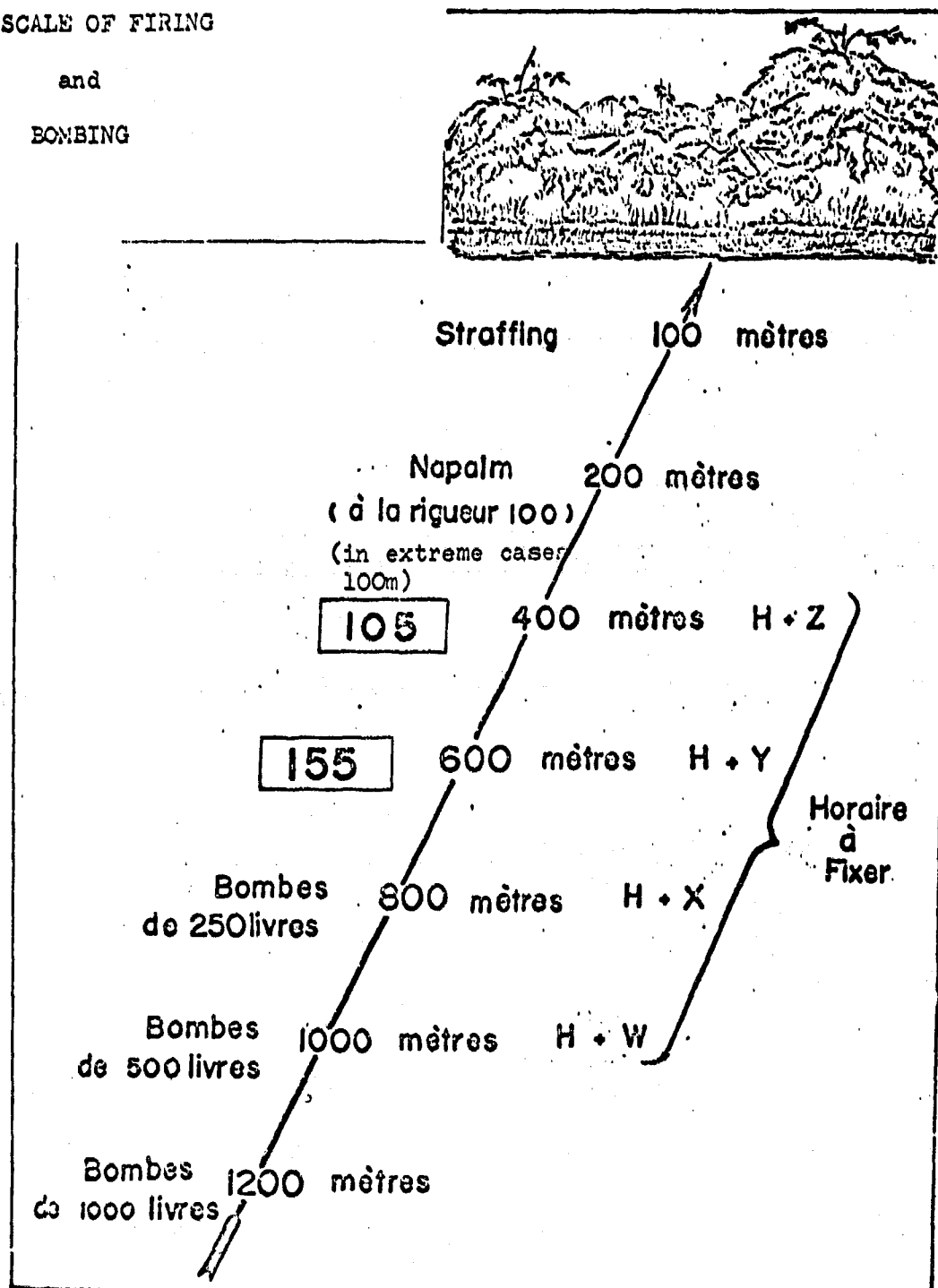
(2) In accordance with the circumstances and means available, some fire supports can be eliminated.

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SCALE OF FIRING

and
BOMBING



Time-
table to be
established

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5. Interdiction of enemy reserve action concerning field-artillery fire within the village and against the edges (which excludes all strafing and possibly even all napalm application).

To obtain the desired powerful and continuous neutralization (1) through this combination of aircraft and artillery fire, it is required that the succession of fire develops without interruption, in synchronization with the infantry movements (and eventually those of the armor) engaged in taking the village.

The duration of the neutralization periods then must be calculated in accordance with the time the infantry advance will take to cover the distances between the successive security lines provided by the different fires applied.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRE SUPPORT MECHANISM

The commander responsible for the village attack must establish his plan of fire support taking into consideration:

- a) the support possibilities at his disposal and its extent,
- b) the situation of his elements and the advance conditions toward the objective (mainly: terrain lines marking the jump-offs).

A. Selecting the interventions

In accordance with the security distances, the particular nature of the objective and the enemy resistance, the commander selects the possible interventions from the ones described below: (2)

Security distances		Possible interventions	Remarks
Normal	Limited		
1200 m	1000 m	1000 lb bombs	The security distance is 1200 m if the bombing is by B-26 in horizontal flight; 1000 m if bombs are dropped by fighter-bombers.
1000 m	800 m	500 lb or 200 kgs bombs	The security distance is reduced to 500 m if the bombs are dropped by fighters in semi-diving.
800 m	500 m	260 lb or 50 k bombs	ditto
600 m	400 m	155 HM 1	The security distance is reduced of 100 or 200 m if the infantry is covered and fire adjustment conditions are favorable.
400 m	200 m	105 HM 2	ditto
200 m	100 m	Napalm	
50 m		Fighter machinegun	

- Notes - (1) The interventions discussed in this Instruction concern only fires applied to the objective proper. Other fire (protection, counter-battery) can be applied to other targets, either simultaneously using part of the resources, either later on after the fire herein discussed.
- (2) The demolition in advance of the entire objective, implies in general a density of fire and a cost of ammunition actually prohibitive. The assailants must be fully convinced that only the resistance system and the military organization, well-pinpointed in advance, are susceptible of being really destroyed.

B. Situation and progression of the infantry

Taking into account the time necessary to post its forces, the attack commander determines the hour in which he will be ready to assault.

He examines the periods of time that his elements will need to reach the definite terrain lines nearer to the security limits allowed by the various fires (L.1 - L.2 - L.3 - L.4).

The Assistant Commanders (D.L.O. in a Battalion, Artillery Group Commander in the M.G.) participate obligatorily to prepare the fire schedule.

PREPARATION OF THE SCHEDULE

The schedule is prepared following the conventional form:

Time	Progression of the attack	Intervention
H	Jump-off from the base	1000 lb bombing
H + W	Progression L 1 toward L 2	500 lb bombing
H + X	Progression L 2 toward L 3	260 lb bombing
H + Y	Progression L 3 toward L 4	155 H M 1 shells
H + Z	Assault starts	105 H M 2 shells

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"H" hour stands for time expressed in 4 digit (XX:00); W, X, Y, Z, stand for time expressed in minutes.

"H" hour (jump-off from the departure line) as indicated in the order above, is only a suggestion. It represents a short period of time prior to the actual progression, which can be modified by the commander but which he will keep into account to estimate the preparation time needed for the bombing missions.

ANSWERS TO THE SUPPORT REQUEST

Upon reception of support requests, the Operational Commander in collaboration with his "fire" Assistant, shall state the terms of the support to be given in accordance with the air resources at his disposal as well as the artillery fire he will be able to assign to the operation.

In the reply to the request the following shall be stated:

- true "H" hour
- means actually assigned.

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LESSONS DERIVED FROM RECENT OPERATIONS OUTSIDE THE DELTAS

Abstract from a Note by the General Commander in Chief, dated December 26, 1953

.....The heads of all the echelons often are still mere reflexes of "motorized elements" used to maneuver with the motor units bound to the roads and passable trails. They have a tendency to forget that our enemy is completely independent of the motor being able to move quickly important forces in the most difficult areas, where we cannot follow and fight it unless we renounce to our motorized means.

It is true, in combats far from the axis of penetration, we are deprived of the considerable asset that the artillery fire represents; but the direct air support can to a certain extent replace it.

In any case, a good infantry must not fear to face the enemy with equal weapons; some of our units have proved that they could and did. They must be put as an example.

DISORIENTATION

In difficult terrain, some of our units at times give the impression of blind men advancing by groping their way, and finding the enemy only when it wishes to be found, then engaging in combat under improvised and defective conditions.

It is normal that some of our non native elements be disoriented in this new kind of terrain; but almost all our battalions have at their disposal native units or local partisans to guide them. So, for battalions arriving from other regions without having such units, the Territorial Commander should see to it that they are rapidly provided with such guides.

A rational employ of such elements in that direction can certainly prevent many delays and surprises.

MEETING ENGAGEMENTS

When our units encounter by day the adversary, either on an expected attack or on a meeting combat, too often they have a defensive reflex. They dream of sitting down on the terrain waiting for the enemy attack... they do not have an offensive reflex.

But, against an enemy which quickly recognizes a formation, it is necessary to maneuver with fluidity to catch it unawares, then attack it in force and cram it without any regard for casualties, forcing it to adapt to our tactics and methods of combat.

For a defensive formation hardly settled, with precarious security, the casualty just buried, with coherent fire plans without gaps, the only efficient warding off is the immediate counter-attack, carried out if necessary by the entire unit, with a direct rush toward the enemy, offering the shock against shock, which so disconcerts the enemy.

With troops lacking solidity and cohesion, one must always remember that it is easier to attack than to defend, that the attack unites while the defense disunites, and to "flee ahead" requires less cold blood and less maneuvering liability than to resist on the spot or in a flexible manner, whenever the combatant is not solidly nailed to the ground by a terrain organization sufficiently strong or when the units are not strongly embodied or energetically commanded.

EMPLOY OF MOBILES GROUPS

a) The Mobile Groups are essentially offensive tools, employed by groupements, with all the resources assembled. Their commander must be entrusted with overall missions and must be allowed to maneuver its elements (battalions, groups, etc.) in such a way as to fulfill its mission in the best way it may see fit.

b) The mobiles Groupes must remain united, i.e., the battalions must move or fight - to the extent the network of roads or trails will permit - with the range limits of the artillery, and they must be able to help each other (fall-back, disengagement, diversion) within the limits of time compatible with the situation and the terrain.

c) The artillery group of the M.G. must not be disconnected (1). It must be at all times protected by sufficient infantry elements. Its head must always be ready to offer to these infantry units the necessary fire support, and to that effect he must use all the possibilities of his equipment: range, field of fire, vertical fire, etc.

(1) This does not mean that all the batteries must be grouped, but that their fire must be concentrated and maneuvered each moment, by the commander of the group.

d) If the artillery cannot support with its fire the infantry units, because of the nature of the terrain or the distance, then one must organize and decentralize the air support.

SIGNAL SECURITY

More and more, the rebels use the radio posts snatched from our units to:

- listen to our liaisons
- try to penetrate our networks
- scramble our operational signals.

Recently, by means of a post SCR. 608 abandoned intact by an artillery unit, the V.M. tried to pass orders of fire, to our groups.

In the area south of the delta, the enemy uses a post SCR 510 to infiltrate our armor network. On the occasion of an attack against a post at X..., the adversary scrambled considerably the frequencies used by our troops, both in SCR.694 and SCR.300.

To abandon intact a radio station is a crime. It has been warned repeatedly that any receiver-transmitter in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy must be destroyed.

It has been explained that the action of an incendiary grenade on the front of the set, destroys it entirely.

Experience however shows that these rules are not always followed.

Therefore:

- all radio station equipment must be ever equipped with an incendiary grenade, accompanied by instructions as to how, in case of need, the radio set can be destroyed.
- all reports of loss of a radio station must be accompanied by a destruction affidavit, signed by two witnesses and certified by the head of the unit.

Furthermore, it is hereby reminded that any station entering our networks must be identified in the following cases:

- whenever one doubts of the identity of its operator,
- whenever the importance of the message transmitted or received justifies it,
- each time the frequency is changed or the composition of the network is modified,
- each time a correspondent calls in one untimely hour.

.....

ATTACK AND SEARCH OF THE CALCAREOUS ROCKS

STUDY by E.M.I.F.T., March 1954

The calcareous rocks generally raise above the ground like islets or groups of islets with craggy walls, in the middle of the general landscape. (1) Accidented pinnacles and caves give them a chaotic aspect, while abundant vegetation invades the convulsions of the rock.

These calcareous rocks are a favorite refuge of the V.M. forces, because of their difficult access and the shelters they provide and hideouts they offer.

In fact, they permit:

- a watching system with extended view and well-covered
- an easy and economical defense
- shelters against air bombing and artillery fire
- camouflaged storage for supplies and ammunition
- eventual operation of small shops and factories within the caves and galleries
- after some arrangements, an inter-communication from cave to cave which permits subterranean traffic.

A CALCAREOUS ROCK USUALLY CONTAINS:

- Avenues of approach of relatively easy access, often covered by thick vegetation
- Vertical or almost vertical walls
- Top of walls with carved out passages and craggs, through which a troop used to rock climbing can easily walk.

ITS DEFENSE THEN CONSISTS IN:

- Watching and economically blocking the passages
- Watching the access to accessible walls
- Disregarding the vertical walls.

A handicap counteracts the permanent occupation of this rocks by a large number of troops: there is no water, which is to be found only at the feet of the slopes.

-
- (1) Paddy-fields or flat plain in the Delta (inlets), and accidented terrain with rolling hills in the medium and high regions.

Furthermore, in front of the enemy it is just as difficult to get down from these rocks as to escalate them.

While taking advantage of these rocks, nevertheless the V.M. seldom uses them as a fortress. So, we can distinguish three different uses of these rocks by the enemy:

1. The calcareous rocks sheltering stores (or even more, shops) are usually located in the heart of the mass, or behind the screen of the flooded areas. Most of the time then are only garrisoned by a security force (stationed there but susceptible to be called out).

The rather small strength of these forces calls for a very sparing defense, mainly based on taking advantage of the caves and accidents on the obligatory routes of march.

To conquer one of the calcareous rocks one must trust on the surprise of the raid type, carried out if possible by night.

2. When the enemy puts in formation important forces (battalion or more), very seldom takes as a base one of these isolated rocks, particularly when there is the danger of being encircled.

The V.M. units preferably deploy at the feet of these rocks, where they find:

- facilities for camouflage,
- cover against the artillery plunging fire and against air raids
- excellent point of departure for their favorite action: counter-attacks.

On the top of the rocks, the enemy has small surveillance posts and sometimes nests of resistance, particularly with D.C.A. elements, which protect against raids.

Therefore, to seize these rocks implies the previous neutralization of these nests and the mop up of the feet of the walls, always guarding oneself against the neighboring rocks.

3. Some calcareous rocks are arranged as refuges or barracks.

In this case the caves are connected by galleries or communication pits, fit for the physical size of the natives, with very strict camouflaging, and all the ways of access covered by traps (mines, etc) and fire protection.

The attack becomes in this case a long and difficult action, calling for the use of flame-throwers and heavy explosives charges.

However, it remains the solution of a blockade or a siege until the enemy has exhausted the water resources.

Alternate uses of the rocks by the V.M., of course, are:

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- Utilization of the calcareous rock by V.M. units trying to break contact with our forces and coming here looking for a provisional shelter;
- utilization of the rocks when a V.M. unit makes halt to prepare for a forthcoming raid,
- utilization of the calcareous rock as a relay station for clandestine transportation of ammunitions, supplies, etc., and only intermittently defended.

In accordance with the form of utilization as per above, the method of attack will vary, basing the action on:

- Either surprise or darkness of night
- or the power of fire,
- or on a blockade.

ATTACK BY SURPRISE

It calls for a thorough preparation after analysis of oblique photographs of the rocks, exact intelligence and use of guides.

Assigned to a commando (or to a unit well-trained in escalading), the attack to a calcareous rock shall preferably be launched by night or under the protection of fog.

At dawn, by necessity one must have reached the dead angles of the main points or at least of one of the main points.

Taking advantage of the first day-light, the assault troop must have:

- finished the encirclement of the lower slopes,
- positioned the automatic arms and the groups of grenadiers on the elevated points, in order to take care of the resistance nests that will come into action;
- to proceed then to the search.

To ward off any eventual failure, it will be necessary to set up fire supports to participate in the following forms of attack:

ATTACK WITH POWERFUL FIRE SUPPORTS

The attack shall aim to "bite" on the calcareous rock, for the purpose of:

- Evicting the enemy from the lower slopes where its resistance is anchored,
- Attaining the dead angle areas relatively to the rock tops.

To that effect it will be necessary to arrange a fire system comprising, from up down:

- Smoke bombs to blind the main points (in certain cases one can use napalm bombs),
- Embrasure fire on all cave entrances and against all rock craggs (57 mm guns, heavy machine guns or, eventually tank fire or tank destroying fire),
- Neutralization fire on the ledges and rock passages where the V.M. can position arms (machineguns and automatic rifles),
- Artillery fire (vertical) or at zero point against the slopes to prepare the infantry assault.
This will be most advantageously topped by volleys of smoke fire in order to cover the bottoms with an artificial fog.

Once the lower slopes are taken and cleaned, the climbing to the main points will be conducted by the natural access ways, under the cover of the neutralization fire which will be displaced as the advances progresses.

Next will follow the search of the walls, following the pathways and traces of trails which will reveal the frequented caves.

In case the calcareous rock is hollowed with subterranean galleries, one will have to advance from cave entrance to cave entrance, by:

- Blowing up each entrance (if one possesses sufficient amounts of explosives),
- Smoking out the occupants (smoke bombs, flame throwers or straw smoke).

During the entire operation, one will watch any hole or crack in the rock to prevent any escape of the enemy.

SIEGE OF THE CALCAREOUS ROCK

The isolation of the calcareous rock is a measure tending to reduce the investment perimeter.

In the case of a mass of calcareous rocks, one must try to fraction the siege by blockades of several islands, or to take one island at a time thus successively reducing the mass.

The investment will be based on:

- Fire barrages on the exits and known passages.
- Flank fire by automatic arms all around the lower slopes, combined with mines and Ribard network elements.
- A stop fire system (mortar or artillery) adding to the flank fire of the lower slopes, on the sector where the massive exit of the enemy seems more probable.

- Installation of automatic arms on the top of the neighboring calcareous rocks, to hold under fire the walls and the summit of the blocked rock. At night, fixed fire will be ready at all moments on the main entrances to caves and passages to the hideouts.
- Maintenance of a reserve unit to contain any attempt of exit.

The siege will be maintained persistently, making use of all methods capable of leading the garrison of the rocks to surrender (set fire to the surrounding vegetation by means of incendiary bombs, loudspeaker exhortations, ostensible preparation of a blockhaus of considerable size to intimidate and discourage resistance, etc.)

After obtaining the capitulation, the calcareous rock shall be subject to a methodical search and all underground communications shall be destroyed.

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EMPLOY OF NATIVE COMPANIES IN THE BATTALIONS

Note of the General Commander in Chief, of Dec. 26, 1953

.....The Commanders of Mobile Battalions often have the tendency to consider their Native Companies as merely additional units incapable of participating in actions of large-scale.

However, such units, provided they are well-commanded and well-instructed (this falling within the competence of the Heads of Battalions) are, on the contrary, particularly qualified for certain missions.

They characterize themselves by qualities and faults deriving from their recruiting and their organization, i.e.:

- Their buoyancy (no heavy arms, limited packing),
- their familiarity with the terrain (used to march in flooded fields, knowledge of the villages configuration),
- their capability for maneuvering (a result from the 2 above qualities),
- their knowledge of the local language and people,
- their lack of "solidity" due to the lightness of their organic armament.

From the above, derives their ways of employ and their place in a formation.

They are particularly fit for the following missions:

a) In the offensive

- thorough search of a village just taken,
- lateral reconnaissance of the marching axis of the battalion,
- outflanking,
- exploitation of a success and poursuite of the adversary in retreat,
- attack by infiltration into difficult terrain or in flooded ground, after big preparation by the artillery and air force.

b) In the defensive

- night encirclement in the paddy-fields, between two villages or strong support points (the latter providing the flank and stop fires),

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- protection of a supply axis or a medical convoy,
- ambushes and night reconnaissance.

Conversely, it is not convenient to entrust to native companies the following missions:

- to guard a wide sector entirely open where the grazing effect of our heavy automatic arms permits an important economy of personnel,
- to attack in force a village (or a zone) solidly occupied by the enemy.

Since it must be at all moments available for a rapid maneuver, the Native Company must find itself initially behind the F.V. units previously committed, in a central position and near the Head of the Battalion who must thus take up any opportunity to quickly maneuver the enemy.

Finally, each Battalion can find in its Native Company the elements needed to form a small S.R. nucleus (10 to 12 selected men) analogous to that of the V.M., which working with the local elements (partisans, inhabitants) can provide information particularly interesting on the terrain, the population and the enemy, provided the men are previously subjected to training, through a simple and fast programme which the O.R. of the Battalion can carry out.

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CHAPTER IV

DEFENSIVE COMBAT OF ASSIGNED UNITS

.....

METHODS OF COMBAT OF THE MOBILE GROUP IN DEFENSIVE ACTIONS

Abstracts from the Study by the
General Commander in Chief, dated
October 14, 1953, already mentioned

DEFENSIVE COMBAT IN THE DELTAS

The Mobile Group takes a defensive position

- each afternoon for the night,
- each time its is in waiting period,
- when it constitutes one of the static elements of encirclement.

In the Delta, up to now, the V.M. has only seldom attacked by day, the M.G. units. This can change if the V.M. succeeds in acquiring an adequate artillery or each time the weather conditions will prevent the employ of aircraft.

In the defensive, the M.G. articulates itself with a formation constituted by encircled support points, occupying either a village or favorable terrain points, capable of supporting each other by mortars or artillery. When the units do not possess accessory defenses, it is advisable to form big support points with several companies or even a single center of resistance for one battalion.

The approaches are cleared of brush. The organization of the terrain (individual pits, parapets, mortar positions, artillery racers, ammunition dumps) is made not matter what the duration of the stationing will be.

The convenience of being able to support the P.A. with artillery and the necessity of enclosing the batteries within the infantry formations, leads usually the Command of the M.G. to distribute its batteries among the various centers of resistance.

For these reasons of reciprocal support (artillery and mortars) the P.A. must keep at a distance of 2,000 to 3,000 meters. Beyond that the artillery support is satisfactory, but mortar support is no more possible.

Sometimes the need to keep a line of communication forces the M. G. to adopt a "rosary" formation, with the P.A. marking the itinerary.

The intermediate ground between the P.A. and the resistance centers are surveilled night and day by patrols, ambushes and warning bells.

The defensive installation of a M.G. never is more than a waiting solution, in preparation of offensive or counter-offensive action. It is never a fixed position.

The mobility within a zone rather large and the detailed preparation for offensive reactions in all directions, constitute for the M. G. its best security; they guaranty its freedom of action and assure an efficient protection of a zone much larger than that one can protect through a fixed position.

These nomad movements become very efficient by a systematic deployment of night ambush screens, across the passage and traffic areas.

These screens, different each night, practically isolate the V.M. units from their bases, stop their convoys and intercept their liaison agents. The results are not generally spectacular, but effective. An area scoured by day by a M.G., is at night blocked by these screens, so very soon is evacuated by the V.M. elements, even of the entire region.

CONSTITUTION OF ENCIRCLEMENTS OR BARRAGES

When the M.G. constitutes the fixed element of an encirclement or a barrage, its defensive formation's purpose is:

- either to prevent any passage into a given area, be it in force or infiltration by day or night,
- or to discover and follow such attempted passage.

Either action depends essentially on the density of the formation and the possible liaisons by fire of the various P.A.

In any case, an encircling formation shall include:

- a surveillance screen by day and by night to discover any attempted passage and determine its direction,
- a stop position constituted by a simple or double rosary of P.A. barring the itineraries or possible passages,
- mobile reserves ready to be displaced in accordance with need,
- a deployment security formation to prevent any external disengagement attempt.

DEFENSIVE ACTION - OUTSIDE THE DELTA

Outside the delta and the controlled zones, the M.G. may have to endure the massive attacks of the regular V.M. formations.

Up to this date, this kind of action has always taken place by night. They are aimed to seize certain support points which the enemy considers essential. A particular target are the points covering the routes of communication. The principles and methods are strictly those the V.M. uses for the attack to our isolated posts, adapted to the overall situation and within the scope of the objective.

- their preparation then is very thorough, may take several days and implies terrain reconnaissances, study of our defenses, of our fire plans, of our fall back itineraries, etc.

The night scheduled for the attack:

- they establish their bases for automatic arms and mortars, not only in view to bracket the objective, but also to neutralize the neighboring P.A. and the artillery batteries.
- they move up as close as possible their assault elements by a silent approach. The approach terrain is organized (covered passages, individual pits, camouflage screens, etc.)
- they prepare feints (fake attacks) to disorient the adversary as to the true direction of the attack.
- They isolate the garrison and cover the operation with ambushes and obstacles placed on the itineraries of withdrawal and of arrival of reinforcements.

This preparation usually takes great part of the night.

Once the formation is set up, the enemy starts preparation fire, feints and neutralizations.

The assault elements come as near as the accessory defenses, then they attack en masse in successive waves.

The first and second waves are made up with voluntaries and are sacrificed over the mined camps and accessory defenses. They are armed with hand-grenades, lengthened charges or explosives.

Behind these first waves, combatants specially equipped for assault (hand-grenades, P.M.) try to penetrate through the gaps and to overwhelm the defense. A fourth wave, including heavy arms, follows for the occupation of the terrain.

The assaults are incessantly renewed without any concern for casualties; the application points are modified in accordance with the discovery of areas less beaten by the fire of the defense.

Usually the attack to a support point of 100 x 100 meters is carried out by an entire battalion, followed by another battalion

as second echelon. A third battalion assures the coverage; a heavy arms battalion takes care of the fire support. Each battalion attacks at least twice. So, between midnight and dawn, four, five or six successive attacks can be launched.

This does not stop the fight unless the V.M. failed to penetrate into the position. Then, they fall back to their waiting positions, well-hidden to air reconnaissance and well-organized for defense.

If the elements have not been able to penetrate into the support posts, they try to continue the conquest, the mop up and the organization in anticipation to our offensive come-backs. Any conquered position is not left isolated, but it is covered and supported by an entire defensive formation, maintained until the recuperation of the booty (arms, ammunition, etc.). Then the V.M. units withdraw, since the holding of the terrain is not their aim.

The M.G. installs itself defensively on a number of closed support points, occupying the essential points of the terrain susceptible of being able to support each other at least by mortar fire. The intermediate ground is surveilled by observation during the day, and by night by patrols and ambushes.

The artillery can be distributed by batteries at the interior of the non peripheral support points. It must be ready to intervene with all its elements for the benefit of any of the support points and on all sides. The support points are provided with liaison and observation detachments.

One must devote particular attention to the signals organization: they must be used to coordinate all group fires and the concentration of various batteries to the benefit of a single support point or the reciprocal support of mortar fire.

The Commanding Post of the M.G. is enclosed within a support point.

The garrison of each support point must be determined in accordance with the terrain, the size of the area to be defended and the stage of organization. Until one counts with adequate accessory defenses (barbed wire and double hedges) it is not convenient to establish too small support points. The company of Franco-Vietnamese troops of 4 combat sections is the minimum strength to be used; otherwise there is great risk.

To effectively resist the attack tactics of the V.M. units, one must be particularly careful with the clearance of the fire fields, on designing and building the accessory defenses. All the networks must be surveilled and beaten on their external sides.

Automatic arms, Commanding Posts and radio stations, as well as the ammunition dumps, must be protected against the 81 mortar shells.

When time is available, one must connect by trench communication the combat positions and the ammunition stores.

Every support point must be protected by day and by night with

fixed and mobile patrols and with warning bells; by day to scare away the V.M. observers and by night to discover the approach of the enemy.

In all support points there must exist a substantial mobile reserve for counter-attacks.

For the support point Commander the defense play must mainly consist to displace and vary the artillery stop fires and the mortar fire concentrations in accordance with the real axis of attack. He must strictly watch the consume of ammunition. He must impose a strict fire discipline. The estimated rate of consumption for the support of a night attack is 2 U.F. for all the arms; 3 for the grenades.

He must launch internal counter-attacks, prepared in advance as much as possible.

At the M.G. echelon the conduction of the defense combat consists of:

- playing the artillery fire and mortar reciprocal support between support points, to help the weakest point,
- adjusting carefully the density of fire, particularly for the purpose of managing the consume of ammunition during the calm periods to intensify it during the critical moments,
- preparing and conducting the overall counter-attacks.

The M.G. Commander must have a mobile reserve sufficiently powerful (about 1 reserve battalion for each 3 battalions in position), to enable him to retake, without delay, i.e. at dawn, any support point taken by the enemy. These counter-attacks must be carefully prepared, supported by the artillery and preceded by the necessary reconnaissance.

The establishe rule is that any support point taken by the enemy must not remain in its hands longer than the following night.

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DEFENSIVE INSTALLATION UNDER THE THREAT OF THE ENEMY

Abstracts from a Note by the General Command
of the F.T.N.V., dated April 22, 1952

.....Serious incidents result in greatly unfavorable balance and make evident two weaknesses well-known and exploited by the enemy:

- the inadequacy of our defense organization at the beginning of its installation,
- the inadequacy of the security measures taken in their station by units deceived by the environment of apparent tranquility and calm,
- the inadequacy of reserve resources: 1 shock team per section, 1 Section per Company, the combat sections of a Company within each Battalion.

DEFENSIVE INSTALLATION

a. Progressivity and urgency

The terrain organization under the threat of the enemy must be conducted so to be usable no matter the degree of advance of the enemy.

Priority must be granted:

- To the fire plan (study of the flank and grazing fire - utilization of any natural obstacle to break the assault),
- To the protection of radio stations and automatic arms,
- To the clearing of view,
- To the engagement of artillery fire.

b. Nature of the organizations

1. Against mortars, bazookas and S.K.Z., the days of Camerone and Bazeilles are gone: one does not defend oneself behind a wall. A unit in the course of installation, must occupy permanently its position and do not withdraw during the night to the neighboring village.

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The only cover usable is the pit, when the terrain permits it, and in the paddy-fields the massive earth embankment welded to the natural soil.

As soon as possible, all the positionings of automatic arms and shortly after all the combat positions (except those of the assigned grenadiers) must be covered under dirt and logs (protection again the 81 shells of full whip).

2. Since the first day of installation, a network must entirely encircle the Support Point; first it will consist of a single pannel or a mere hedge of the MORIN type (the outer side must be vertical to prevent the setting of means to cross over, packs of bamboo, or boards, which would make the passing over easy).

The first obstacle is later thickened, but to start with it must be:

- continuous
- beaten in enfilade by the automatic arms (mainly on the outside)
- provided with lighting devices protected by traps
- stuffed with mines or 81 shells with electric release (fired by the Head of the Group). These devices must be removed at the departure of the unit, even if it is relieved.

S E C U R I T Y

a. Intelligence and distant security

The enemy launches its attacks brutally and without warning. Our units too often are taken in by the apparence of calm, partially created by false intelligence supplied by informers not very carefully chosen.

A mistrust always in alert and a close collaboration with the intelligence officer will help to sift the information. Reconnaissance missions carried out night and day and as far as possible, will aid to discover the planting of enemy elements susceptible of attacking the P.A. A continuous observation by day, through binoculars, will be also set up. The observation point must be the highest possible, clear of trees, bell tower, of pagoda roof, etc.

b. Close security

Day and nights, the P.A. must be protected with alarm bells placed on the access routes and crossing points. Mines and lighting devices protect them and make their action more effective. When the alert is sounded:

- the artillery releases its protection fire
- the garrison takes its combat positions.

c. Immediate security

Besides the watchers, a permanent guard is assigned to the automatic arms, working b shifts.

The radio liaisons are systematically checked.

While the organization is still incompleted (without trench communication) all men take their rest in their combat positions, arms at the reach of the hand.

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V.M. TACTICS TO OPPOSE OUR ATTEMPTS TO SURROUND AND ENCIRCLE

Abstracts of a V.M. Study on counter-mop up, appeared
in the Politico-Military Revue, for October 1952

.....The mop up tactics of the enemy is essentially simultaneous attacks and encirclement. So, the counter-mop up tactics must consist in facing the enemy's tactics of simultaneous attacks and encirclement.

This tactics presents several fundamental points:

IN THE EVENT OF LARGE-SCALE MOR-UP OPERATIONS one cannot expect to resist against forces considerably superior, by remaining inside the besieged position. Therefore, for such cases, our encircled troops are ordered to break the encirclement and bravely or secretly move towards the flanks or the rear of the enemy. An element of minor importance shall remain in the position maintaining the resistance and harassing the enemy. Thus, the enemy will encircle uselessly a position from which the mass of our forces will have evacuated.

IN FACE OF POWERFUL ADVERSE FORCES encircling the area and impossible to exterminate, it is preferable to assign combat mission to small units. These small units, because of the familiarity with the terrain and the region, will have the mission to intercept the enemy, to harass it, and if the opportunity comes, to annihilate it. They will make an effort to disorient the enemy and, by cooperating with the popular guerrillas, they shall conduct sabotages, harassing action, and setting up mines, with the purpose of wearing the enemy and prevent it from freely indulging in pillage and arson.

The activities of these small units shall facilitate the action of the main force, which will breach the encirclement and once outside will launch the attack against the enemy.

ONCE THE ENCIRCLEMENT IS BREACHED, the troops shall be stubborn in wrenching the initiative of action. They will try to discover the "badly guarded points" on the flanks and in the rear of the enemy to launch the attacks (raids or ambushes) exploiting the surprise effect to inflict severe blows to the adversary. After the attack, the troops shall move rapidly to another place. Furthermore, the friendly troops shall attack the supply lines, the small enemy units posted behind, the artillery elements and the Commanding Posts.

The essential is to remember that the breaking of the encirclement has as main purpose to wrench from the enemy the initiative of action, for immediately after to attack it.

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While trying to break the encirclement, the troops shall operate in secrecy, with rapidity, and taking precautions against a new encirclement by the enemy.

UPON CONCENTRATING ITS FORCES TO MOP UP A REGION, the enemy leaves badly guarded points in other regions. One must learn to take advantage of these opportunities by attacking these badly guarded points, in order to force the enemy to abandon its mop up plan.

Thus the troops will be able to attack the badly guarded points, destroy certain support points, intercept the reinforcements, lay ambushes against transportation convoys, sabotage the communication lines, in short, disorganize the enemy's plans.

In the occupied zone, depending of the locality, one can adopt divers forms of fighting: against the forced recruitment of coolies, demonstrations demanding the return of husbands and sons, against the enrolment in the rebel Army, etc.

If the opportunity presents itself, one can exterminate the partisans and the traitors, and so adopt progressively the form of "armed fighting".

WHILE OPERATING IN A VAST REGION, the enemy troops must move along a number of routes of communication and cross several villages. It will be necessary to multiply the destruction, the sabotages, the harassing action, in order to delay the progression of the enemy troops, by wearing and tiring them. It is necessary that the enemy faces our presence everywhere it comes to, and that he is not left free to pillage and burn.

In regards to the "encirclement", problem of extreme importance, one must discuss the following points:

- How to arrange the troops and take precautions against encirclement?
 - In case of encirclement how to conduct the combat?
 - Which are the points to bear in mind to break the encirclement?
- a) In posting the troops, one must adopt a formation very carefully studied, to adopt all the necessary precautions against the encirclement.

The positioning shall be ruled by the topographic situation, the shape and accidents of the terrain, the attitude of the population and the situation of the enemy. One must not settle for long in a same locality. It is necessary to adopt a great mobility. Secrecy must be maintained and one must ward against spies and traitors.

Taking into consideration the features of the battlefield, as a general rule it is possible to echelon the defensive formation of a village in three lines:

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First line - Utilization of the terrain around the village.

Second line - Occupation of the edges of the village.

Third line - Occupation of the terrain accidents and high dwelling within the village.

Troops must not remain in big groups or assemble in the same. They must encamp in two or three villages, which will permit to act in cooperation in the event of an enemy attack.

It is necessary to obtain information on the enemy posts in the vicinity, by sending disguised elements to observe the enemy's activities.

It is necessary to maintain close liaison with the regional guerrillas at the neighboring village to reinforce the surveillance. Thus the troops will be protected against any enemy surprise.

If the enemy attempts the encirclement, the troops will then have sufficient time to move to another region or to take the necessary measures for the defense.

- b. All units, large or small, must avoid being encircled by the enemy. However, if they are encircled, those troops unable to breach the encirclement must bravely sustain a defensive combat, waiting for the arrival of night to try to break it.

In general, except for very favorable occasions (well-covered terrain, arrival of reinforcements) which may favor the breaking of the encirclement during the day, it is better to wait for the coming of night to attempt it. One must abstain from useless counter-attacks badly organized, or from "hazardous breaks".

All friendly forces outside of the encirclement must help the encircled elements, by attacking the flanks or the rear of the enemy.

POINTS TO BE REMEMBERED IN TRYING TO BREAK ENCIRCLEMENT BY FIGHTING

Selection of the propitious moment to pierce the encirclement.

In case of the conditions not being particularly favorable, one can resist until night comes, and then try to break the encirclement by profiting of darkness. Usually, at night the encirclement relaxes.

Conditions to pierce secretly the encirclement lines, are favorable when one knows the situation of the enemy, the routes of communication, the terrain and the region. Avoid the axis ending into unfavorable terrain or into a waterway. The axis of encirclement breaking must be selected in accordance with the badly defended points (between two enemy columns, for instance).

- Political action must be undertaken to encourage all cadres and combatants to fight the enemy with decision to escape the encirclement.

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- Forces will be regrouped to attack with determination a weak enemy element. The encirclement line will be pierced with bravery, ardor and swiftness.
- The encirclement line pierced, one shall charge a "strong element" to intercept the enemy soldiers rushing to the pursuit of the enemy troops. The rest of the main forces, shall reassemble at a pre-arranged point, for reorganization before resuming the march. This halt will permit the forces to regroup and to reorganize the resources for any subsequent incident.

NOTE FROM THE E.M.I.F.T.

In another document issued on December 21, 1953, the V.M. lists the intelligence their agents must particularly collect for the effective use of the above tactics. The list is remarkable:

PRIOR TO THE MOP UP one must obtain the following information to disclose the operation:

- Concentration of the troops and build up of provisions deposit in strategic points of the region.
- Conferences between the officers at the Post of Command (since wherever they operate, the M.G. are put under the orders of the Commander of the area).
- Activities of the Moranes and enemy spies in the target region.
- Arrival of numerous spies in our zones and guerrilla bases (often mingled with liberated P.I.M. or with soldiers on leave).
- Shifting of post officers; accelerated activity among native troops and militiamen; preoccupation of the soldiers' wives.
- Preparation of materials for road repairs, destruction of obstacles, and installation of telephone poles. Preparation of living quarters particularly in strategic points and bases in the rear.
- Organization of fake convoys and diffusion of false news tending to attract our attention to other regions.
- Organization of small-scale mop ups to permit the Commandos to conduct searching in the region and to interrogate the peasants.
- Violent artillery shelling and sometimes air bombing of regions near the posts recently taken by our troops (these bombings have often the mission to prevent the destruction of the defense works in such posts as an speculation for re-occupation).
- Evacuation of the traitors' families from the villages.

It is necessary then that we be kept up to date on:

- Habits of the enemy: reaction after a series of attacks, Summer activities, preventive measures against our Fall-Winter campaigns...
- Nature of the convoys, strength of the garrisons, supply depots, number of guns and stock of shells.
- Regional militia, its movements, activities, opinions.

.....
DURING THE MOP UP it is necessary to collect the following intelligence:

- Nature and importance of the convoys, number of guns and shells.
- Enemy units in operation: nomenclature, composition, strength, arms.
- Artillery positions, Command Post, encampment points, routes followed.
- Intention and tactics of the enemy.
- Signs indicating an imminent withdrawal or move to another region.

Role of the agents assigned to watch the support points

- In normal times, have the Command Posts surveilled permanently, both those of the sector and the sub-sectors, as well as the posts located in strategic points. In operational periods, strengthen the surveillance of the land and water routes of communication susceptible of being utilized by the enemy for the transportation of ammunition.

- To have, in the first place, surveilled the support points located in the zone of operations to get information on the nature and importance of the convoys, on the units (strength, name, composition, weapons, artillery) and on the intention of the enemy and the opinion both of the soldiers and the population.

.....
Role of the reconnaissance and intelligence permanent detachment

a) To go to the encounter of the enemy columns

The main mission of the permanent reconnaissance and intelligence detachment is to go to the encounter of the enemy columns to gather exact information on their intentions, their tactics, their strength, to allow our troops to operate or to avoid encirclement.

.....
 - To avoid loss of liaison in case of displacement of the unit, the agents will convene the Sub-Committee every day 30 minutes before dusk, to review all the activities of the day and receive new missions. In its turn, the Sub-Committee shall have the day teams relieved by night teams, so there will be no interruption in the surveillance and we will not miss any enemy movement.

b) To guide the unit at the moment of breaking the encirclement

To break the enemy's encirclement line is a difficult task requiring bravery. The life of the entire unit depends on the success. In these circumstances, the Reconnaissance and Intelligence Detachment assumes very heavy responsibilities because it must guide the unit.

Nowadays the breaking of the encirclement lines is not carried out as in old days. In spite of the great concentration of troops in the present operation to break the encirclement, it still presents great difficulty, although it does not require as much sacrifice as formerly. To execute these missions with results, it is necessary:

- To organize a team composed with officers and agents charged to watch the enemy since dusk. The team must rest during the day and start marching at night fall. At this moment it is easy to observe the enemy which, having suspended all attacks, goes into encampment and organizes the setting of guards and ambushes.
- When the exact information is collected, one of the agents goes to report to the Sub-Committee the situation of the enemy while the rest of the team gets nearer to the encampment to observe the dispositions taken by the enemy.

- The weakest points in an encirclement line are generally the wide fields, the banks of waterways, the axis of communication that pass near the posts. The break is easier late at night shortly before dawn.
- When the encirclement line does not show any interruption, one must choose the weakest point, i.e. the place where the enemy troops are distributed on a largest surface, where the terrain offer maximum advantage.

c) To help the troops to destroy the enemy by looking for the weakest points

- One must seize any opportunity to destroy enemy units, small or large, particularly the artillery groups and the Posts of Command which are those more heavily defended, but having the tendency to feel more secure because they have troops on all sides. Furthermore, the artillery men, tired from a long day of work, have a very heavy sleep.
- The enemy troops encamping inside the villages often neglect to take precautions. When the enemy troops are more than 2 Companies, one must set up a watch composed of 1 or 2 groups, positioned in the heights outside the village. Another group watches inside the village. The troops are always group in the sector of the village easier to watch.

The enemy watch is particularly alert during the first part of the night, but tends to be negligent after midnight.

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The defense of the village is very organized on the side our troops are supposed to arrive. The other sides, especially when they are lined with roads or waterways, are often neglected. The officers are billeted in the largest houses at the center of the village.

Surveillance is only very close on the borders area. Once passed this area, we are sure to find very few sentries. Sometimes the defense is organized very thoroughly: barb wire across all roads, bamboo branches laid all over the pathways, automatic mines buried on the ground, traps and ambushes laid all over... but these cases are few.

The C.C.B. and the artillery elements very often neglect to take precautions, relying on the external lines of defense.

The guns are usually installed near a post, on the road, in a cemetery or between two lines of barbed wire. At night, to guard them only 2 or 3 sentries are left. Most of the artillery men go into the post for the night and do not come out unless called for action.

The C.C.B. also install themselves near the posts, inside the villages, in the pagodas or communal houses. With their burdensome baggage, their loose command and organization, and the negligence they show for their own defense, they are easy to capture in any surprise attack.

- In the lookout for the enemy weak points, do not neglect the old works of preparation of the battlefield. The information needs not to be as complete as for a post attack. Sometimes, the reconnaissance and intelligent agents can be accompanied by troops, to launch immediately an attack on a weak point just discovered on the enemy line.

.....

AFTER THE MOP UP

We must foresee the withdrawal of the enemy in order to pursue it or ambush it profiting of its weak points (fatigue, negligence, disorder, burdensome baggage of wounded men). Here are the signs preceding a fall back:

- Arrival to a zone with quantity of parked empty trucks.
- Progressive withdrawal to the rear of the artillery elements, to be detected by a firing less and less violent.
- Successive fall back of small elements.
- Capture of a great number of youngsters, women, and old people for the transportation of baggages. Destruction of villages up to that moment spared.
- Progressive fall back of troops towards routes of communication.
- Active search for our bases and destruction of same by regional forces having remained inactive until then. (During mop ups, the garrisons of regional posts do not take part in the operations).

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- When an operation fails to attain its purpose, i.e., when the enemy does not succeed in discovering our troops, one can expect a quick withdrawal or a rapid displacement to a neighboring region.
 - Observing the direction taken by the artillery, one can foresee the next zone of operation.
 - The withdrawal formation is not subjected to any established rule; it depends on the nature and the duration of the operation. If the goal of the enemy was to discover our regular units, the fall back will be quick and by all the units. If it was a mop up operation of a routine nature, the fall back will take place earlier and in the following order:
 - First one evacuates the artillery or places it at the head of the convoy.
 - Then, the wounded and the dead and the booty follow (except those from the distant units).
 - Sometimes the units gather near a route of communication, to withdraw altogether. Other times, they fall back separately (one or two companies each half hour) and by different routes.
 - Lack of vehicles sometimes forces the units to wait by a road till midnight. The men in such occasions do not hide their discontentment and neglect precautions.
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LESSONS DERIVED FROM RECENT OPERATIONS
OUTSIDE THE DELTAS

Abstracts from a Note by the General Commander in
Chief, dated December 26, 1953, already mentioned

.....
BIVOUAC SECURITY

Some of our elements are harassed or attacked in their night bivouacs, because they start their encampment too early before dark or because of lack of discretion or because of installation in an area observed by the enemy. (Many units commit the error of encamping by night near the parachute-supply D.Z.).

Unit heads must have the energy to impose their forces (in spite of fatigue or necessary displacements) the execution of a rapid terrain organization, within a period of no more than one hour. A unit arriving before dark to a place with covered terrain, and establishing a bivouac under discretion and improvisation, is not usually discovered or attacked in force. (Arrival of an hour before dark must constitute the maximum).

STATIC DEFENSE

Units do not settle for a durable period unless they have the mission to maintain at all costs an essential point of the terrain.

The organization then is hurried at the maximum and one applies the rules valid for the defense of posts (counter-attack elements, alarm bells, etc.)

FALL BACK

Because of circumstances, some of our units have found themselves isolated in the middle of an enemy formation and have tried to rejoin their bases. Some have succeeded: those that no matter the effort and hardships, have restrained themselves to wait until night to escape, avoiding the frequented trails, living on the land, abstaining from requesting parachute drops of supplies, avoiding points systematically surveilled, such as posts, cross roads, important villages.

At the course of these fall backs, our units are delayed by the transportation of our wounded, too proud to abandon them at the hands of the enemy. This is an honorable feeling, but in such situation, that the safety of the troops is above the safety of a few. The abandonment of the wounded when thus necessary is a cruel decision, but it must be taken without hesitation.

EMPLOY OF MOBILE GROUPS

If assigned a defensive mission, within a given area, the M.G. does not establish itself within a line of static points. Covered by a complete system of intelligence organs, the M.G. maneuvers within the selected zone, always ready to attack any adverse action.

The M.G. is never static... movement is the key to its security.

Its battalions do not set down on support points, but move nomadly day and night in a moving formation, which the enemy cannot determine always ready to advance in two or three privileged directions.

All M.G. Commanders or analogous groupings (G.A.P.) must be able at all moments to release their commanding elements, abandon the route and travel afoot together with a P.C., to terrain away from the motor-passable roads to places where they can follow their battalions' action closely, in difficult terrain.

DESTRUCTION OF MATERIALS

When the circumstances impose the destruction of certain materials: armament, ammunitions, vehicles, supplies, the heads have the duty to imperatively effect the destruction, which must be complete and controlled.

Aviation action in this respect is quite insufficient and one must not depend on it; to leave such destruction to it is evasion of duty which must not be tolerated.

CHAPTER V

OFFENSIVE ACTION OF TERRITORIAL UNITS

ROLE OF THE MOBILE DETACHMENTS OPERATING WITHIN THE TERRITORIAL NUCLEUS

Abstracts from a Study by the General Commander in
Chief, dated October 14, 1953

.....The action of the intervening mobile detachment takes place within the nucleus of the territorial politico-military action. It is based on a balanced defense system, at the same time static and mobile, resting on solid political infrastructure.

a) The backbone of the static organization must be a good network of routes of communication including at the same time penetrating and transversal roads and economically equipped for a sensible application of effective works.

b) Within this military grid, the mobile units must expand in space and time the action of this defensive formation. The units act on intelligence supplied by a permanent network of information,

- either in a preventive way, a priori, nipping in the bud the enemy attacks through ambushes or mop up operations,
- or in a repressive way, a posteriori, by hunting immediately any enemy detachment insinuating an attack.

c) This overall action, already coherent, must be further consolidated to the conjunctive tissue of the villages auto-defense, which fills the smallest gaps of our system.

But this static ensemble of anchor points, and of control, constituted by the posts, is not sufficient to assure the military supremacy and the pacification of a region. The long-range and detailed offensive actions executed by the local mobile reserves must extend the posts action and thus innervate our formation.

In peripheric areas, the mobile units overflow even the frame of their defenses and extend their action into the enemy formation.

PRINCIPLES OF THE MOBILE DETACHMENTS ACTION

Since long time it has become evident that because of the choosy combat methods adopted by our adversary, remarkably profitable at that, no tangible or durable result is to be expected by the mere presence of our units in any given point of the controled territory.

A. - One must then establish the main principle that only the operational activity yields results, and covers and guarantees the pacification because, precisely, it brings about a reversal of the situation to our favor.

From the above principle other ideas no less essential can be drawn:

1. In all situations, no matter the state of the pacification and the resources available, one must absolutely get rid of the mentality of besieged people, which never leads to success and which unfailingly creates the worst miscalculations.

2. Every Commander must and can create around his post, headquarters or sections (within the regions in contact with rebel areas), an operational zone under which cover he will be able to carry out true pacification, and on the edges of which the V.M. will always be in a permanent state of insecurity.

B. - Then it is convenient to establish a second principle: that the frequency and the density of local military actions is an essential condition for success.

This principle accepted, it becomes evident that the posts acting in isolation are the ones that must deploy the maximum and the more constant activity, in order to create that insecurity zone for the enemy, with the clear notion, however, of never be able to entirely create such a zone unless the echelons immediately superior coordinate their individual actions in a harmonious way.

One must then conclude that if the posts and headquarters actions maintain always their value, one cannot conceive the effective and durable action of the mobile detachments at the sub-sector or sector echelon, these being the only commands having sufficient resources to create their own reserves and play them in connection with the detail actions of the subordinate formations within the space and to prolong the effect of same within the time.

But it is still necessary that even in the Sector echelon, the operations be frequent so that the effect of each one adds, within the time, to the remains of the previous operation, which at the beginning is extremely brief.

The conviction of the need of these actions, their frequency and density, is not sufficient yet if, enslaved by habit or badly adapted methods, the detachment Commanders must think of them, and organize them a few days in advance.

Very often then one will reach a hopeless position, due to the delays of preparation and of execution, which are incompatible with the frequency and rapidity demanded by these operations.

C.- Therefore, be it a matter of repressive or preventive actions, whatever the importance and scope of them, the mobile detachment operations must respond to a double principle: RAPIDITY and FLEXIBILITY.

- RAPIDITY of conception, of launching and of execution
- FLEXIBILITY in the command, in the employ of resources and in the development of the action.

VIET MINH REMARKS ON OUR BEHAVIOR

The interrogation of prisoners and the spontaneous statements of partisans, put under special light several weakness (or superiorities) connected with our regular behavior.

1. Discretion of movement

If sometimes our operations become known to the enemy prior to its launching, some time is due to indiscretion, but more often it is due by the movements preceding the operation.

In some regions, the setting up of artillery batteries allows the enemy sufficient time to disperse.

The displacement of observers marching individually or by groups of two a few hundred meters from our columns, allows the enemy to define the shape of our formations even before establishing them in position.

2. Study of the terrain and habits

The in force operations of the enemy are never improvised, but prepared after a long study of the terrain, of our system of defense and of our habits.

The regularity of our patrols, our opening of routes, at regular hours, in the same formation and on the same itineraries, contribute to the failures of our units.

3. Surprise

Surprise, when it can be obtained, is on the contrary, at the base of all success.

Rapidity in organizing the operations, immediate exploitation of valuable intelligence, camouflaged concentration of our resources (brought at the foot of the positions by diversionary operation), contribute to the obtention of surprise for important actions.

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Commando raids using Vietnamese personnel are particularly feared "because they are as swift and shrewd" as the V.M. ones.

Thus, by admission of the very adversary, we hear of certain weakness and also some superiorities in our regular behavior.

An increased watch system, rapidity and discretion in our movements, a practice to destroy complacency, use of dynamic units, are rules to be observed in the operation of mobile detachments.

MODES OF ACTION OF MOBILE DETACHMENTS

The mobile detachment commander must, under the light of the well-known principles, organize the operations in an extremely short time and to launch them at no matter what time. He must be sure to be able to impose his will to the adversary and to command respect and fear by using elements trained little by little, dispersed from the posts progressively as the mopping up progresses, and making use of the modern means of combat with the increasing knowledge of the terrain to cover. This knowledge of the terrain must be such that any European or noncommissioned native officer must be able by day or by night to recognize the point where he stands, and to orient himself to proceed in the itinerary.

A. PRELIMINARY DISPOSITIONS - RESOURCES

Most operations of the mobile detachments often do not need written orders. A half an hour briefing on the map, with the unit or sub-detachment commanders present, and taking notes, is already a luxury; often verbal orders given from the top of an observatory are quite sufficient.

For operations of a maximum of 48 hours, it is useless to foresee a complete and detailed development of the action, since one of the characteristics of such action is precisely its being able to be modified at infinitum in any moment.

The detachment commander must make an effort to prepare the operations on the strength of the initial articulation of his reserves, so to avoid displacements of units in advance.

In case of absolute need, such displacements must take place at the last moment.

One of the constant preoccupations of the detachment commander in operation, must be to maintain the maximum mobility in view to maneuver, to attack and to pursue.

It is important then to be swift both individually or collectively.

One must take drastic measure to become so.

No matter what number of companies or infantry sections he can

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assemble, the Detachment Commander will pay special attention to the inner radio liaisons, which must be perfect; otherwise he may be reduced to impotence or failure. So, in all cases, he will attach to his post a D.L.O., and if possible, he will endow each detachment of one such D.L.O.

He must be able at any moment to call for fighting planes, even if the radio station for such purpose becomes, as in many cases, unusable for security reasons.

It is useless to count on support interventions which must requested through regular channels, since many have lost any value at the time one could use them.

One must procure air support for depth operations; this is an additional reasons to have at one's disposal the necessary radio station.

Mobile artillery pieces must be in a position to be able to support the action from jump to jump, which often implies its displacement. Therefore, the maintainance of a network of road in depth must be a constant precoccupation of the commanders of each territory.

B. - THE ACTION PROPER - EMPLOY OF RESOURCES

1. SECURITY

Action Physiognomy

In accordance with the main features of the action, the mobile detachments can assimilate themselves to:

- either to a coastal navigation, from known point to known point,
- or to a buccaneer's distant raid, starting from a known base.

On the first ones we do not need to insist, except to emphasize the suddenness of these raids, launched either on intelligence collected or as intervention; in them one leaves a small detachment at the anchor point or inside a friendly formation, which provides by itself a singular security sometimes sufficient.

On the second ones, conversely, they imply a total autonomy and the certainty that one will not need to resort to the departure point unless it is for artillery support, followed eventually by air support (fighters) if one decides to extend the raid beyond the artillery range and if the weather conditions permit it.

These operations in depth will occasionally need additional security dispositions.

March security

In all cases, march security for the mobile elements depends on a prudent dispersion of the resources (too often enslaved by the trails and dams) and on the rapidity of movements or the action of the forward elements.

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Furthermore, in the case of operations in depth, the Detachment Commander, just like a cruiser returning from a raid, must bear in mind that he has been for long time observed by the enemy and as such awaited on the approached of land.

He will have to look then for supplementary guarantees of his security and so undertake a return route entirely different from the one taken for the raid; otherwise he will have had to take the necessary measures to be protected upon returning, in the unavoidable crossing point. These points will have to be held securely, and the best way, if means permit, is to leave there a sub-detachment. This detachment, be it charged to hold a mountain pass, a cross-roads, a gorge, or a bridgehead, must be stronger the longer it will have to remain isolated, the more exposed it is to the observation of the enemy, and the more limited are its defense installations. It will have to be provided, like all other sub-detachments with all the liaisons and supports established for the ensemble of the troupes.

To these security measures inherent to the general topography of the terrain, one must add the permanent security measures related to:

- a formation systematically opposed to a dangerous assembly of resources,
- to the tempo of the march, always very rapid to such an extent that on the way out, for instance, there will be only those halts imposed by the difficulties of the route,
- to the activity of the forward units :

a. by day

The desired formation shall be obtained:

- laterally, by the diversity of itineraries; advancing through various axis, either concentrical, or parallel with belt roads;
- longitudinally, by lengthening the columns in depth, not by increasing the intervals between men, but by taking distances some times considerable between units, particularly in covered regions.

The vanguard by day must be like a well-spread rake often renewed, because assigned to the hard work of marching in flooded terrain and in the jungle, to reconnoiter village edges or villages proper, always at the lookout for mines, it needs periods of relief. (This spreading of the day vanguard, greatly helps to discover the strings for the pull-action mines planted on unavoidable passage points, where the V.M. can cause us great casualties without any risk for itself. This raking formation must have searches alongside the roads but not on the roads themselves, so to discover the strings of the mines which sometimes reach almost to the axis of the road, if the enemy has had time to determine the direction of march of the detachment).

One must hold the heights fit for observation, at least on the basic points. There is where the Commander of the Grouping must be, together with his P.C.

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b. by night

The mobile detachment shall start always preferably by night, since the night moves are the only ones capable of yielding the results of the surprise, since the V.M. believe that night is its domain even if its vision is poor, in contrast with some of our troops (the African for instance) which can move exceptionally well in total darkness.

By night, the lengthening in depth is generally subject to so many errors that its use is not recommended; one must keep the men in close and well-disciplined formation so the ranks can be often verified to see that no gaps exist in the columns.

March security by night rests then almost solely on lateral spreading on many axis and on the work of the vanguard.

The composition of the vanguard is extremely important since it must foil and eliminate the alarm systems of the adversary.

The vanguard must comprise indefectibly dynamic natives, able and well-trained for their special work, which consists in establishing verbal contact with the control and observation posts of the V.M., with the D.K. of a village one must cross or with an encampment of regulars. They must get as much close as possible and sometimes liquidate the matter with arme blanche. For this last resource, the Senegalese soldier is particularly qualified.

It is a task then that must be carried out as team work; the men advance with set bayonet, since the surprise attack often demands silence.

The search for mines and security measures needed by these devices, is not a night task, unless the enemy has discovered our movement.

Station security

Halt is made only in the darkness of night, except of course when the encamping place imposes otherwise, since one must be persuaded that no movement is entirely free from the observation of rebels, which are many and well trained as observers.

If halt is imposed prior to the fall of night, one can have a portion of the detachment to continue the progression and then at night turn around.

One must position the artillery fire.

In station, just as in marching, the degree of dispersion authorized must be governed by the volume of the opponent's resources in the vicinity. In some territories, a section can be detached without great risk, while in other regions to fragment a battalion would be a serious mistake. In any case, one must not consume the entire resources in a peripheric defense; always a reserve element, of relative importance, must remain ready to launch a local counter-attack.

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For the operations of several days which carry the detachment far into the rebel zone, security must be furthermore sought in procedures which will tend to lead the enemy to underestimate the forces committed and to deceive it.

The employment of various march axis contributes to the former, since the rebel observers already have a tendency to exaggerate to acquire merits.

The enemy can be deceived by using rapidity of movements, counter-marches, slight displacements by night and systematic use of shelters, topped by an actual disappearance of the units, which leaves the observers full of doubts and concern.

The Annamite temperament in fact is never at ease, rightly or wrongly, until fully and precisely convinced that one can meticulously prepare the action in full detail.

One can then employ all kinds of tricks to create uncertainty. One of the most effective, although the most delicate to execute, is the fake departure. Either at the return from an operation or at night-fall, one leaves while in march, or in a village, or in the woods, but always carefully camouflaged and silent, a light detachment of 30 to 40 men maximum, well chosen and trained. This detachment must be able to subsist frugally during 24 hours, with good liaisons by radio and eventually supported by artillery. A real commando in ambush, the detachment waits for the enemy in this resting place; the rest of the group units can go ahead several miles and act on the data the detachment transmits by radio or to move back to the detachment when the latter rushes into action.

Rapidity of movements, dispersion of resources and bluff are then basis for security. In combination, they allow the most audacious actions and contribute, even more than the combat (unfortunately too rare) to advance the goal of submitting the enemy.

2. COMBAT

Up to now, the most ordinary characteristic of the V.M. tactics is the refusal of combat whenever one cannot muster a great superiority of elements or cannot count on the surprise.

However, this absence of engagement of certain importance must not lead to the conclusion that the operations without the presence of the enemy are useless. In fact, the circumstances in which maneuvering leads to interception or destruction of the adversary, are very rare. So, one must accept very often to play a secondary but highly paying role: the role of the dog that raises the game for the hunter, in our case the hunter being the aircraft or the artillery or both.

It is in this hunt that the reconnaissance plane is particularly effective: it "marks" the game "raised" by the infantry, keeps the latter informed of the movement of the enemy, adjusts the artillery fire and above all (thanks to its VHF station) directs the hunt much

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better than the infantry commanders could do from the ground. The latter very often lacks points of observation and in many cases cannot orient its pursuit or impart to it the proper tempo, since the enemy usually has the choice of the terrain.

The combination Infantry, Morane observation, and Fighter plane, is one of the most profitable.

Furthermore, if it is always wise to launch operations based on intelligence, it is not always indispensable to wait until the presence of enemy elements is reported, to go after them. On the contrary, the creation of a climate of insecurity demands that we go everywhere, at all times, far and near. This, of course, changing the form of action the second time one comes back to a target.

The ambushes and the engagements shall be entrusted to dashing units supposed to be in an advantageous position. This is a practice favorably applicable upon leaving a night encampment, or when one takes the same return itinerary.

Upon establishing contact with an enemy that accepts the combat, the action must be conducted expeditiously:

- The sub-groupements must march by artillery fire.
- The radiolialison is permanent.
- The maneuver must be simple.

As soon as the V.M. feels that it is being maneuvered, its fleeing starts and then our pursuit must be fiery and swift, lighted if possible by aircraft and so converted into a deadly action.

This kind of action justifies the imperative necessity of traveling light. In the presence of an adversary that flees and that flees very fast, it is useless to lose time maneuvering or trying to position a fire base: the Detachment commander will make an effort to apply artillery fire, but mainly he will play at maximum his infantry resources in the mere pursuit when the formation does not allow to attempt encirclement.

The circumstances shall recommend other forms of combat and others will be imposed on us if there is a mistake or clumsiness on our part, such as falling into an ambush in covered terrain or into traps in the villages. In the villages, in a region held by the rebels, one must not be satisfied by simply reconnoitering the village; before crossing it, one must thoroughly search for caches and inspect underground hideouts. If this cannot be done because of lack of time, one must get cover from a rearguard and then simply avoid the village by taking a detour.

These are rules to be absolutely followed by night.

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SECURITY FOR SMALL SHIFTING ELEMENTS

Abstract from a Note by the General Commander of
the F.T.N.V., dated June 17, 1952

..... Security for the detachments operating outside the posts and that for their itineraries depend mostly on an active search of the terrain, a rapid signal system, and a wise exploitation of the data.

A.- An enemy element will have little chance to lay an ambush against us if to do that it must cross an active and dense system of information. An enemy unit whose activities and movements are closely followed, is practically neutralized and almost destroyed. This implies an exchange of continuous information with the neighboring territorial units.

B.- In a most immediate way, surprise will yet diminish these chances of success if:

- by night, the activity of our patrols and our ambushes oppose the enemy movement or at least disclose it.
- by day, an alert and careful observation watches the surrounding of the support points. It can be favorably supplemented with the use of civilian agents planted in advance.

C.- In accordance with the circumstances and the resources on hand, the Commander shall exploit the information, after being checked, either actively or passively, if no more.

1. Actively

- reinforcement of the resources initially or usually scheduled for the sortie;
- build up of a counter-ambush;
- appeal to the upper echelon to obtain reinforcement means or the set up of a more important action;
- launching of infantry or artillery fire, calling for air support.

2. Passively

- cancellation of the scheduled sortie
- modification of its modalities and particularly of its itinerary.

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SECRECY

"A cautious man is worth two."

The advantage is even more on the side of the enemy when there is negligence, indiscretion or premature traces on our part of our plans. The best guarantee of secrecy is the unexpected launching of the action, which does not exclude a careful preparation.

On the contrary, the routine execution of the same sorties, without changing the modalities of time, itinerary, strength, etc., results in keeping the enemy up to dat of our intentions. —

SUPPORT TO SHIFTING DETACHMENTS

Any detachment operating outside a support point must be able to:

- instantly benefit from the support of the heavy arms of the post, or from an echelon of fire, specially positioned,
- within the shortest delay, be supported by artillery.

For this purpose, a radio liaison and, whenever possible, a visual one, must be established between the support point and the displaced element.

Furthermore, a reserve must be maintained at the post ready to intervene on immediate alarm if the displaced detachment establishes contact with the enemy, for the purpose of helping to the disengagement or to cover the fall back of the detachment. The modalities of this intervention will have been discussed and ordered in advance.

MODE OF PROGRESSION OF THE DETACHMENTS

The detachments, no matter how small, assure their immediate security by advancing toward an articulated formation, by jumps and by successive echelons.

Covered toward all directions (scouts forward, flank guards, rear observers), every detachment must advance echeloned at least in two elements progressing alternatively so to be able to support each other in turn, with a battery of automatic arms.
.....

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VIET MINH AMBUSH TACTICS

Abstract from 2 V.M. documents distributed in 1953

.....

SELECTION OF TARGET

1st instance: Attack to a little important element of territorial troupes (one or two Companies) to annihilate it entirely.

a. Selection of the main target:

The main attack is directed to the center of the column, where the P.C. of the enemy is probably situated. The element assigned to attack the main target must hide in a favorable spot permitting a rapid jump-off, an easy assault and an entire concealment before the attack.

b. Selection of the secondary targets:

The ambushes, being generally laid on stretches of roads between two enemy posts, the elements in charge of secondary targets will have the mission to:

- prevent the enemy column to flee toward one of the neighboring posts,
- intercept the enemy reinforcements.

2nd instance: Attack to a Mobile Group with the intention to annihilate an element.

a. Selection of the main target:

When the enemy forces advance in echeloned column on a great depth and one cannot evaluate their strength, we will limit our attack to the vanguard.

The main attack shall be directed to the point where the enemy column must be cut in two; then the main element will be sufficiently powerful to fulfill its triple role: to cut the enemy in two, annihilate the vanguard, contain the gross of the column.

b. Selection of the secondary targets:

The first element in charge of this secondary mission must be relatively powerful, since it must attack the enemy on one of its flanks and support at the same time the main attack. A second element (head plug) must have solid shelters and a powerful fire base.

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F O R M A T I O N

1st instance: Attack of an element of territorial troops.

General considerations: In the Delta regions controled by the enemy, it is difficult for us to gather powerful forces for the following reasons:

- Complexity of the terrains;
- Difficulty in maintaining the secret on troop displacements and to surprise the enemy;
- Military superiority of the enemy: superiority in number, air force, artillery;
- Activity of the enemy intelligence networks.

On the other hand, we have political advantage, a superior fighting spirit and good popular bases. To win, one must have forces two or three times superior to those of the enemy.

Main target:

In principle, the element in charge of the main attack must be of a crushing numerical superiority. However, we have learned by experience that it is not necessary to commit $3/4$ or $4/5$ of the total forces to the main attack; $1/2$ or $3/5$ is sufficient.

Secondary targets:

Let's take into consideration the enemy and the terrain situation to reinforce, if needed be, the head or the rear plugs.

Formation of the forces in order to accomplish the encirclement of the enemy as soon as it enters the ambush zone

In the Delta, since the terrain offers us few resources and makes difficult for us to maintain secrecy, it is possible to dispose the troops in advance so to accomplish the encirclement of the enemy as soon as it enters the ambush zone.

One conceals the troops in distant places, leaving only near the road small detachments, ambushed in camouflaged pits.

These detachments occupy in advance combat positions and protect the advance of the main elements, which only start to approach when the enemy arrives.

Let's keep into account the advantageous terrain points (communal house, street, dwelling, pagoda, cemetery, etc.) to arrange wisely our troops, since the attacked enemy will resort for its regroupement to such places in order to resist.

Our formation must allow us to corner the enemy into an advantageous position to destroy it quickly.

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2nd instance: Attack to a Mobile Group.

We must schedule forces three times more powerful than the enemy to be destroyed (one battalion against one company or three battalions against one).

Assigning to the main attack 2/3 or 3/5 of the total strength.

Form a first detachment powerful enough to effectively help the main element to annihilate the enemy.

MISSION OF EACH ELEMENT

1st instance: Attack to an element of territorial troops.

The head plug must:

- stop the enemy progression;
- intercept the reinforcements sent in.

The head plug waits until the entire enemy column has entered the ambush zone; then it starts firing. It generally gets ambushed inside a village and lets the reconnaissance detachment go by. It does not open fire until the gross of the column arrives if these two elements are separated from each other by too long distance.

This will permit the rear plug to close in on the last enemy soldier that goes by, thus facilitating the fulfilment of its mission to the main element.

The rear plug remains constantly on the lookout and starts to approach as soon as the enemy head element enters the ambush zone. It must, if possible, reach its combat positions before the launching of the attack, to be able to open fire at the same time with the head plug.

Presently, it must:

- cut the withdrawal of the enemy;
- help the main element to destroy the enemy.

When the rear plug, before its arrival, is observed by the enemy at an attack distance, the enemy rearguard will try to oppose its progression. In such case, it is necessary to move around or encircle the enemy, after having left in position a small element charged to contain the assailants.

The main element accurately calculate the time to arrive at the precise moment of launching the attack together with the rest of the detachments.

Next, it must:

- Overcome and rapidly fraction the enemy;
- Corner the enemy into a disadvantageous position; prevent it to seize positions suitable for a counter-attack.

The harassing element joins the other detachments for the purpose of:

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- Preventing the enemy to escape;
- Hunting the fleeing elements.

2nd instance: Attack to a Mobile Group.

The roles of the different elements are more or less the same in the preceding case. The only difference is:

The main element must:

- Cut the enemy column in two;
- Contain the gross of the column;
- Help the first secondary element to fraction and destroy the vanguard.

COOPERATION OF THE FIRE SUPPORT ELEMENTS

1st instance: Attack to an element of territorial troops.

a. Organization :

In case of the existence of a place permitting to control the entire ambush zone, located at a convenient distance, it is a good practice to concentrate there all the heavy weapons (machine guns, 81 mm and 60 mm mortars) grouping them under a single command.

In a contrary case, one must distribute the heavy weapons in two or three places and leave with each company their 60 mm mortars. However, in all cases, the fire of the different elements, for a given phase of the combat, must be concentrated on very defined targets.

b. Cooperation :

Prior and during the approach all fire support elements must energetically intervene to permit the shock elements to easily engage the enemy.

During this phase of the combat, the main fire is supplied by the FM., the machine guns, and the mortars of all calibers, belonging to the head plug and the harassing element.

2nd instance: Attack to a Mobile Group.

The reunion or the dispersion of the battalion heavy weapons, as well as the concentration of fire, are subject to the same rules. But the 3/4 of the fire support forces are to be concentrated to the spot where the enemy column must be cut in two.

NOTE FROM THE E.M.I.F.T.

In one of the documents one finds the following indications and details regarding the lay out of ambushes and the fall back of the elements after the ambush.

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If the head plug is prematurely discovered, it will resist only lightly to give the impression that it consists in a simple guerrilla action; then, it will wait until the rear plug has reached its positions, to counter-attack violently.

Hide near the road a small detachment charged to cut the enemy withdrawal from the beginning of the attack, and constituting a bridgehead to favor the approach of the rear plug.

PURSUITE OF THE FLEEING ELEMENTS AND FALL BACK

2. In principle, there is no fixed limit for the pursuit of the fleeing forces. But in the Delta, in friendly zone, it is good to:

- stop pursuing at 1 kilometer from the enemy post;
- let the pursuit of isolated fleeing elements to be carried out by the regional guerrillas, in order to avoid too much dispersion of troops;
- in case of attack to a M.G. watch the artillery which can fire in the melee without distinction between friend or foe.

b. Fall back after a victory

Up to this date our fall back plans have been very loosely established; we had the habit of establishing only the time, the itineraries and the assembly point. This negligence has caused us numerous casualties.

So, it is necessary to prepare in advance a detailed fall-back plan, maintain during the march the formation of the units, foresee the precautions to take in case of air or artillery bombing.

- Do not return to old encampments except if absolutely necessary; never remain in the vicinity of the combat terrain.

To trick the enemy draw its attention toward a small detachment, which then will take an opposite direction to that of the gross of the unit, by have said small detachment go by near an enemy post.

.....

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ROAD OPENING

Note from the General Commander of the F.T.N.V.
dated July 2, 1952

..... In accordance with the importance of the itinerary and the security of the zone we are crossing, the road opening regime has two aspects:

A. Important routes with heavy traffic and almost total security

Some routes go through well-controlled zones by day, and benefit from the guarantee of a heavy civilian traffic.

1. by day

After an early morning road opening (very necessary, if no more to clean out the mines), the itineraries are everyday turned over to civilian traffic except when the roads are guarded or blocked for the eventual passage of a convoy.

2. by night

Traffic is prohibited to civilian vehicles and to isolated military vehicles (mainly jeeps or ambulances). The road is open to armored or motorized patrols watching for sabotage, or to operational convoys.

In this last case, one must take particular security measures in advance, and the transported troops carry out their movement "with caution".

B. Routes through insecure zone

1. The roads in insecure zones will not necessarily be opened to traffic every day, but only to the extent of need.

One will endeavor to maintain a road opening regime based on avoiding any regularity as to hours and days. To avoid indiscretions which can warn the enemy sufficiently in advance to make the road unusable, the opening date and the time will be given as late as possible to those in charge of opening them to the users.

2. When a road in insecure zone has been opened, this does not mean that it does not need to be "surveilled". By means of signs or orderlies (from the C.C.R. and the posts or support point garrisons) one warns the users as to follow the regulations posted in each case by the territorial authorities in accordance with the situation, bearing particularly on the:

- number of vehicles (2 or more) authorized to travel in convoy;
- number of passengers (1 besides the driver) and amount of arms

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- in each vehicle;
- mandatory use of anti-mine mats.

Based on intelligence gathered, the authorities in the locality can temporarily increase the security measures and even momentarily close the itinerary, provided they immediately notify the higher levels.

3. Closing of a road must be effective (i.e., barriers, barbed wire, or a sign guarded by an orderly) to prevent any violation.

MODES OF ROAD OPENING

A. The security of the road opening patrols and those of the detachments operating in insecure zones, depends on the following factors:

1. Intelligence from all sources

- Population - Agents;
- Aircraft (Morane reconnaissance to be requested in case of suspicion of ambush);
- Observation; operated by day from the support point, or by night, from observation points, by means of listening antennas;
- Ambushes laid on the avenues of approach to the itineraries;
- Day reconnaissance and night patrols; interpretation of traces indicating an abnormally light or heavy activity in the paddy-fields or a decrease of affluence to the market place;
- Eventual utilization of previous reconnaissances by the population or by native military personnel in civilian clothes.

2. Secrecy

- Orders issued as late as possible (when such order are transmitted by radio or by telephone, it is advisable to use a conventional code, particularly to announce the time of road opening).
- Elimination of traces capable to disclose prematurely the sortie of a patrol.
- Avoid all routine in the time schedule and other procedures.

3. Fire support to be effectively prepared for the road opening operation proper, and ready to be released promptly on the basis of good liaisons (radio or visual, whenever possible),

- post heavy weapons,
- support echelon protected by the posts arms, if the patrol advances beyond the range of the post artillery,
- artillery and aircraft.

4. One sees too often road opening patrols marching along the road in single file with slung arms. The whole patrol must advance cautiously (forward and flank scouts, rear guard) and by successive echelons (one halting with arms in position, while the other advances), in a formation permitting each element to rush to each other's help (firing or disengagement action).

The maneuver must be carried out away from the center of the road and searching and occupying the strong points of the terrain, from which to act on the road if necessary.

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Only the detection team takes the center of the road, inside the formation. The clearing of mines besides can be made upon the return of the road opening patrol, return which shall be executed following the same security rules and, if possible, by an itinerary other than the one followed on the way out.

If superior forces are encountered, effect a lateral disengagement to avoid the latch the enemy usually sets on the itinerary followed on arriving.

5. Reserves (particularly armor reserves, if possible) must be kept on the alert, ready to intervene promptly in order to disengage or cover the committed patrols. The engagement of these reserves must respond to two or three hypothesis, permitting the intervention without harming the security of the maneuver.

B. The importance of the road opening patrol (personnel and armament) depends on the situation and the terrain.

1. Whenever, by necessity or because of the short stretch of itinerary to be covered, the patrol is particularly light and because of that cannot be articulated in two echelons, no automatic rifles shall be carried, because they are easily lost in a short distance surprise. Only the P.M. and the grenades allow an instantaneous response. Not fit for unexpected fire, the automatic rifles will be:

- either in position, protecting the riflemen-grenadiers or some other displaced team,
- or in movement, but within a compartment known to the riflemen and, if possible, under the protection of another F.M.

A light patrol, thus composed of one or several groups of riflemen-grenadiers, operates within a radius of automatic arms efficacy from the post, or under the protection of positioned special support echelon. This a typical example of application of the flexible section "quaternary" type, and of the adaptation of the resources of the mission.

2. In case of increased momentaneous enemy pressure, the road opening must be conducted the sector or even zone echelon, with important resources in all arms (armor and particularly engineers). The task takes then the real shape of an operation, and can call for the positioning of fixed protection during the entire course of traffic flow.

CLEARING OF THE APPROACHES AND PROTECTION OF THE ROUTE

A. One will undertake the clearing of view for a minimum stretch of 200 metres on either side of the road, and then the clearance of view will continue to be maintained.

B. A road not used for traffic is a cut road. It is better to control less itineraries and to open them more frequently.

During the closed periods, the itineraries can and must be watched, providing them with a sort of indirect protection susceptible if not to keep intact, at least to diminish the extent of destruction.

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Ambushes and patrols, operating by night, shall create for the enemy an unsecurity zone along the road, and this will discourage the saboteurs.

The surveillance and harassment patrols, free from the task of road opening and mine clearing, shall not operate within the axis of the road but will widely maneuver on either side of same.

.....

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MOTOR CONVOY SECURITY

From two Notes by the General Commander of the
F.T.N.V. dated May 12, 1952 and March 11, 1953

..... The security of the itinerary taken by a convoy must be provided by the corresponding territorial authorities. Each sector or sub-sector commander must be warned in advance with sufficient time to take the necessary measures.

a. The road must be opened and guarded. Protection must be assured all the necessary time by the mobile or fixed elements which must not be on the road itself, but at the approaches, so to be able to effectively control the dangerous positions or their access.

In case of absolute impossibility of leaving the road, this detachments must turn the back to it and watch the approaches.

b. For each Sector, a light motorized patrol, armored if possible, shall scour the stretch of road entrusted to the Sector. Informed of the fixed positions of the security detachments, the role of the patrol is to control and ascertain the identity of any armed element or suspect individual traveling on the road in the proximity of said positions.

c. A reserve sector, motorized if possible, must be maintained on the alert at a point of the road where it can intervene rapidly in the stretches usually dangerous.

d. A system of radio communication, carefully set up, must rally the corresponding territorial authorities with the units in charge of the road security and with the reserve element.

CONVOY SECURITY

There is no "transportations", but only "movements" - It is then the unit commander effecting the movement the sole responsible of the execution of same and of its security. It is up to him, in agreement with the head of the TRAIN element, to stipulate before departure, all the security measures to foil an ambush.

a. All troops moving in trucks must be ready to promptly react with fire or if so needed by maneuvering, against any ambush.

For this purpose:

- the personnel trucks must be without tarpaulins;

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- All individual arms must be loaded, the automatic rifles must be set in battery on the vehicles, now toward the right, now toward the left side of the road. Each man must have grenades ready to be thrown.
- Exact instructions shall be given before boarding the trucks as to way to act in case of attack, besides the instinctive and spontaneous reaction to fire.

Orders shall be given, particularly, to put all radio stations inside the unit, in listening position at the least alert.

b. Organization of the convoy:

- The organic vehicles of the moving unit must be grouped in column at the center of the convoy.
- The scout-car, closing the file, must protect the stalled vehicles, and then escort and regroup them. No vehicle rejoins the column alone.
- When the scout-car is thus delayed, the security of the tail of the convoy is assured by an element provided by the moving unit, riding on a vehicle especially arranged (with central benches) traveling at the beginning of the tail of the convoy.

RECENT V.M. TRICKS

Some of the recent attacks to convoys have characterized themselves by the following facts:

- The convoy personnel had the impression of encountering a friendly security patrol or element, stationed on the slopes of a road; a sign of halt was given to the target vehicle, by an European forming part of the ambush V.M. troops.
- The attack was not launched until the arrival of the last vehicle of the column; the close-line scout-car was far back, delayed by some stalled vehicles.
- The convoy troop did not react at the moment of the attack; besides it had not taken any measures to be in a position to do so.

.....
..... The V.M. often uses controlled mines and an assault element exploits the results. One must know that the explosion of a mine can be the signal of start of an ambush attack.

If the disposition of the troops seem unfavorable, the enemy will start its attack only on the last vehicles of the convoy.

In open terrain it will use tricks, disguising itself as a simple

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peasant working in the paddy-field or simulating to go to the market or to a funeral.

Consequently, one must keep the following rules:

- No vehicles occupied only by the driver;
- Protect the rear of convoys;
- Check the identity of field laborers by the road opening patrols ;
- Search for the mine release strings.

.....

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V.M. WATERWAY AMBUSH TACTICS

Extract from a V.M. document issued in 1953

.....
The ambush is laid on a place with the following conditions:

- Existence on a length between 1500 to 2500 meters of a rather wide stretch of dam;
- Existence of villages on either side of the waterway;
- Narrow expand of water;
- Irregular bottoms forcing the navigation to follow a given course, lest they sink;
- Emplacement assuring protection of the rear (covered against surprise or encirclement).

1. Collection of intelligence

Time necessary : 1 to 3 days. The information necessary is:

- Waterways system and places where the ships must unavoidably pass;
- Enemy traffic on the waterway: importance and frequency of convoys;
- Shape and terrain accidents on both banks, etc.

2. Distribution of forces

Entire force: One heavy weapons company and one Infantry company or battalion.

Armament: 5 S.K.Z., 2 PIAT, 4 12 mm⁷ guns, 4 machineguns, 4 or 5 bazookas, 7 automatic rifles for each Infantry company. (Sometimes one can use artillery and more 12 mm⁷ guns, machineguns and automatic rifles.)

1st element (main target) :

5 S.K.Z. and two automatic rifles.

2nd element (secondary target):

2 PIAT, Bazookas, 2 automatic rifles.

3rd element (head plug) :

2 12 mm 7 guns, 2 machineguns, automatic rifles.

4th element (rear plug) :

2 12 mm 7 guns, 2 machineguns, automatic rifle.

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3. Role of the different elements

The 1st element shall concentrate its fire on the larger steamers which travel at the center of the convoy (usually L C T).

The 2nd element shall open fire against the largest steamer in order to drive the entire convoy toward the place where the 1st element is hiding. It will destroy the canoes.

The 3rd and 4th elements shall fire on the enemy soldiers on the deck of the steamers. They will destroy the small boats trying to flee and they will prevent the landing of the enemy troops.

4. OCCUPATION OF THE COMBAT POSITIONS

The occupation of the combat positions starts at midnight and is completed before dawn. If the positions are on a dam, arms are hidden in the cracks which are used as loopholes over the waterway, camouflaged with grass. The cracks themselves are covered with a layer of dirt.

Should there exist a parapet on the dam, one emplaces the arms behind it, cutting only loopholes for the combatants.

At each end of the stretch of dam selected, one establishes an observatory on top of a house or on a tree.

The Command Post is established in a village near the dam. It is connected by telephone with the lookouts and the various elements.

5. The attack

When the enemy convoy reaches a point at about one kilometer of the rear plug, the first lookout alerts the Post of Command, which passes on the order to all the elements to be ready.

As soon as the convoy enters the stretch of the waterway selected for the ambush, the 2nd element opens fire and the rest of the elements go into action as scheduled. (NOTE - The first shot can be fired either by the 1st or the 2nd element; there is no established rule; all depends on the circumstances of the terrain situation and of the waterway.)

In the event some steamers or boats succeed in getting away, the machineguns, the 12 mm 7 guns, the Bazookas and the PIAT shall hunt them.

6. Mop up of the battlefield

Dead and wounded are evacuated as the battle goes on, to the rear by the popular help. After sundown, the guerrillas shall comb the field to recover arms from the sunken steamers and boats.

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V.M. MARKET-PLACE AMBUSHES

From a V.M. document of August 1953

.....
.....Their goal is:

- to sabotage the enemy's economy;
- to prevent the population from going to the market place, and to stop the civilians to do business with the enemy;
- to recover arms (although secondary).

WHAT TO DO BEFORE AND AFTER ATTACKING A MARKET PLACE

Before the attack, the guerrilla cell must invite the population to refuse any business dealing with the enemy. After the attack, the cell must continue the propaganda to make the people understand the purpose of the ambush.

PREPARING TO ATTACK A MARKET PLACE

Get information on:

- The number of soldiers coming to the market and their weapons;
- their attitude, their precautionary measures;
- entrances and exits of the market place;
- disposition of the produce stands within the market;
- distance separating the market from the post;
- road leading from the post to the market;
- days and hours the market takes place. The hours when the most people is within the market;
- control to which are submitted the people entering the market;
- Strength, armament and equipment of friendly forces (quantity and quality);
- Attitude of the merchants toward the soldiers' abuses;
- Feeling of the merchants: Have they understood our propaganda? Do they always sell provisions to the French?
- Establish the time of the attack. Plan the means of action, the precautionary measures to take for any event;
- Clearly assign each mission;
- Agree on the conventional signs to launch the attack, to alert it and to fall back;
- Establish the assembly point, the road and mode of withdrawal;
- Prepare the arms and equipment necessary. If needed be, train for the attack in circumstances analogous to reality.

HOW TO PREVENT INTERVENTION OF THE NEAR-BY POST

Prevent the intervention of the neighboring post by creating a diversion.

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Example: Upon the start of the attack to the market place, a guerrilla man hidden in the vicinity of the post throws a grenade in the camp and flees away. The enemy, surprised, will not be able to react until a certain period of time has elapsed.

HOW TO PENETRATE INTO THE MARKET?

Men disguise themselves as market vendors (carrying produce baskets) and penetrate the market. They are armed with flails, knives, machetes (weapons easy to camouflage and which one can abandon after use). Remember that in an attack to a market fighting is always hand to hand.

TIME OF ATTACK

Select the hours when there is the most people in the market. Act very swiftly.

DISTRIBUTE MISSIONS BETWEEN THE VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE ASSIGNED CELL

Divide the 5 members of the cell in two sub-cells: The first sub-cell (1 guerrilla man) will be charged to create a diversion in order to prevent the neighboring post to intervene; the second sub-cell (4 guerrilla men) assigned to attack the market.

The second sub-cell will not launch the attack until the first sub-cell has regained position. Each man must choose his place by taking into account the next man's position. (They can communicate with the eyes). Each man selects a different target from that of the next man.

Start by killing the armed soldiers and take their weapons. (On distributing the missions, designate the guerrilla men charged to attack the armed soldiers.)

WHAT THE HEAD OF THE CELL IS TO DO PRIOR TO PASSING THE ORDER TO ATTACK

After conducting an inspection tour to make sure that all men have selected their targets, the head of the cell can give the order of attack (a secret signal agreed in advance). At the questioning look of the head of the cell, each guerrilla man answers with another look indicating that he has the target selected.

WHAT THE GUERRILLA MEN DO AT THE SIGNAL OF ATTACK

The attack must be launched simultaneously by all the guerrilla men. Each man must rush to his target, destroy it and seize his weapon. Then, start yelling uproariously to disperse the mob and intimidate the enemy. Profit by the disorder and mix with the fleeing civilians taking the aspect of vendors.

HOW TO HIDE THE RECUPERATED ARMS

Do not carry away the recuperated arms. Hide them near-by, under a layer of dirt or in a pond, then come back for them.

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ROLE OF THE GUERRILLA MAN CHARGED TO CREATE A DIVERSION

a. If the market place is near the post :

The man must throw the hand grenade into the enemy camp immediately after the start of the attack to the market place. The enemy, surprised by the explosion, will not dare to leave camp immediately.

b. If the market place is far from the post :

The man hides on the side of the road, waits for the enemy to pass and throws a grenade to stop its progression and create alarm.

IN CASE THE ENEMY IS NUMERICALLY TOO STRONG

If the head of the cell discovers at the last moment that the number of armed soldiers exceeds that one had foreseen, and he considers the conditions unfavorable, he will without hesitation postpone the attack for another date.

SMALL UNIT FIGHT IN THICK FOREST

Abstracts from a Study made on September 1st, 1953 by the Director of Forest Combat Training in South Vietnam, followed by a report from the Battalion Head.

.....

1. There is no impenetrable forest. This has been proved by the units familiar with it. Even in the most adverse cases: flooded forest, bamboo groves, inextricable clumps of raffia, trail-blazing march with machete is always possible. Only the speed changes. It may come to 3 to 400 meters per hour, in comparison with the tall trees forest where one can advance at the rate of 3 kilometers per hour.

2. Vision is always very limited

It may sound like a topic, but to assert that the lack of open view in the forest is a great handicap, is just the statement of a fact which has an enormous bearing in the forest tactics.

3. The forest is not a silent place but the foliage constitutes a dampening screen for noise.

Every small unit head must be absolutely convinced that total silence is an essential element for immediate surprise. But he must not ignore the fact that because of the innumerable noises of the undergrowth and because of the dampening screen that thick foliage constitutes, volleys cannot even be heard at 2,000 meters from the point of firing.

So: - one must not count on help brought by alerted friendly troops which hear our firing;
- but nevertheless one must not renounce to obtain surprise at the same time.

4. Our 1/100.000^o map, where targets are vaguely indicated before departing, supply us with valuable information (general direction, approximate distances), but as far as details, the map is not accurate and upon approaching the target it is useless.

Then we have the guides: prisoners, recent partisans, agents. But even if they do their best at the approaches of the target they are not of much use; they are not native of the "forest desert" where they may have lived for just a short time, or by necessity. More often they know only the spots they inhabited and know the familiar trails which anyway are the ones we must in principle avoid.

The conclusion then, is that the discovery and the assault of a forest target is always a very delicate matter.

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5. In the forest times does not count

- Marching outside the trails is usually very slow and thousands of obstacles, particularly in the rainy season, come to slow it even more (particularly the overflowing streams).
- The search for a target must be surrounded with infinite precautions if one must obtain immediate surprise. The same goes for the exploitation of a trace discovered by some element.
- A forest sortie does not fit any time schedule or many times not even a given itinerary.

6. The forest is the surest shelter

This must be emphasized because of the important lessons involved.

When a friendly column penetrates surreptitiously a thick forest (aided by darkness, for instance), the enemy does not know of its presence and, even when discovered or suspected, the enemy cannot determine the actual strength, the resources, or the emplacement of them.

When finally our column decides to go into action, that is to say to reveal its presence, even then the forest offers new shelter and concealment means, as well as a position to discourage any pursuit (traps, plugs). So, one can conclude that the forest is the ideal region for the light patrol. Practically undetectable prior to the surprise, unseizable afterwards, it can hope for everything and fear nothing, not even having the problem of the transportation of the eventually wounded.

Knowing that it does not possess the means to interdict "the vast forest desert" to any of our detachments, the adversary endeavors to protect it the best it can.

Distant protection :

- Watchers at the edges and on the avenues of approach.

Their mission is to sound the alert and to mark our advance, either by rifle shots or by throwing grenades, or even by sending messengers to report.

- Trinh-Sat Agents, which follow the column in order to determine its importance, its general direction of march, and to deduce its intentions
- Isolated sharpshooters, sometimes up the trees, firing on individuals for the purpose of delaying the column.

Close protection :

- Ambushes at the clearings the detachment must cross, probably on the

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double, or on the main road if the enemy is imprudent enough.

- Mines or traps intensified after the alarm is sounded.
- Mobile detachments, very flexible, trying to harass our elements during the march, or at the halts or bivouacs.

PREPARING A FOREST SORTIE

- Men travel light to the maximum. One must omit anything cumbersome or noisy (bulky sacks, helmets, metal containers, etc.)
- At the most, provisions for 3 days carried by each man. More than that would require porters.
- One fire unit is always more than sufficient, although one can assign one or two P.M. carriers to support the riflemen. The P.M. is by far the best combat arm for the undergrowth, and 6 or 8 clips are quickly fired.

MARCH FORMATION

The company seems to be the smallest elementary unit capable of action in the forest. A battalion then can act maximum on three axis (one per company, with a reserve company on the main axis). In the forest one cannot scout and protect a front. The only protection is the echelonement in depth within each unit of the section or battalion.

The only commandable formation is, for a light element, the single file. Of course, no need to be maintained when it becomes possible to abandon it (tall trees forest less dense, clearing, etc.)

Also very appropriate for a column of a certain importance is to mark halts and spread in all directions, after selected points. The "antennas" rejoin the column after their reconnoitering, unless a definite sign seems to justify the intervention of the gross of the column, and therefore a change of direction or a hook.

- If this system of spreading in star form is not adopted, or another analogous idea is applied, a column can cross a portion of the forest but it cannot be said that it has been thoroughly searched.
- Each column must be preceded by 2 to 4 or 5 scouts. Agile, fluid, traveling light, these sort of "Sioux" creep through the forest without leaving a track; otherwise, if they are noisy and clumsy they cannot be called scouts.

The head of the column opens the trail and marks the direction; the scout of the center adjusts his march with that of the orienter or by listening to the noise of brush cutting when blazing is necessary.

- In areas of thick vegetation, the speed of the marching is governed

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by the efficiency of the trail openers. The importance of these few machete handlers is never sufficiently emphasized.

Coolies. Each company must have only the T C I coolies (ammunition, heavy arms, signal service, relief for officers - particularly if they are European). The other coolies (T C 2) are conveniently grouped with the main column (P.C. of the Battalion. Reserve Company).

COMMANDER'S POSITION

- The commander of a light element walks at a short distance of the scouts he orients.
- In a rather important formation, he has two alternate solutions none of which is truly satisfactory:
 - To command personally the head section by integrating it, or
 - Remain at "his" place, in spite of slowing the progression if he demands to be continuously informed.

UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER

- If the column undertakes a trail, its antennas are exposed to encounter isolated enemy elements traveling in opposite direction (enemy scouts, observers in displacement, liaison agents, guerrillas, etc.). These encounters must be liquidated in a matter of seconds and depend on the one hand, on the silence of the column, and on the other, on the capability of the forward scouts.

In case of an ambush, the first seconds are decisive. The troop must react immediately, fire and rush toward the enemy with great noise. It is not easy but essential. The commander must have the mortar or mortars (50, 60 or 81) near him and have them fired as rapidly as possible (moral effect rather than material).

The employ of these mortars for "blind firing" is a questionable practice, but in fact it proves to be excellent.

REAR PROTECTION

One must leave behind a counter-ambush team which hides, listens, observes and then rejoins the column easily by following its track.

HALT PROTECTION

All directions being equally dangerous, the square formation seems to be the best one. For night encampment, there is a tendency to regroup the companies (psychological factor, personal liaison with the commander, transmission of orders for the next day - which almost always arrive by night, better defense against the V.M. attacks, facility of supply). Protect the Battalion square with night ambushes and patrols.

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OUR MODES OF ACTION IN THE FOREST

- Ambushes laid on trails apparently frequented. Besides the feeling of insecurity resulting from the losses caused to the adversary, any capture may be the promise of good action.
- Raids based on intelligence collected. If entrusted to a selected element perfectly commanded, the success of the raid depends on the validity of the information and the capacity of the guide.
- Patient research of eventual targets. The commander has entire freedom of action and operates without concern for effort and for time.

These three types of action depend on the surprise and the surprise shall be obtained:

a. By maintaining absolute secrecy :

- Mouths shut, discrete equipment, elimination of coughers, command by gestures, strict fire discipline.

b. By changing over and over the time schedule and the itineraries :

- The enemy has good observers, but it is to be noted that they are almost located at the same posts and that they are withdrawn by night.
- Only wide detours to avoid observers and the arrival at the target at the most unexpected time, can assure for us the surprise needed with all the advantages involved.

If the mission is to search a V.M. implanted zone, it is recommended to set up a "base" or more exactly an encamping point for the Battalion.

The Battalion's P.C., the coolies, the reserve, are established at a point beyond which the companies radiate and to which they return after their missions are accomplished.

SIGNAL COMMUNICATION

- The range of radio communication is considerably reduced (absorption). Particularly, the range of the 300 stations is reduced to a few hundred meters.
- Furthermore, the troop frequent obligatory recessions delay considerably the speed of progression.

Recessions to stipulate: 1 before departure, 1 at the middle of the day, 2 in the evening, 2 at night. Besides, a good norm is to listen in the 300 stations at the first sound of an engagement.

- It is also a good practice to foresee the reconnaissance signals (acoustic and visual) to avoid miscalculations which generally are costly.

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PARTICULAR POINTS

It is clear that one could not simply answer "yes" or "no" to the question of whether one should or should not follow the trails.

The decision shall depend on the value one attaches to surprise, the time and the strength available, the thickness of the forest, the accuracy of the information and even the phase of the operation.

Having the above into consideration, a column running into a path after a long march through the forest, can follow it for a short while for a quick approach to the proposed target. It is a risk one must run.

If it is foolish to neglect the enemy observers, it is no less so to believe that the enemy has permanent observers everywhere.

- Crossing a clearing :

- Upon arriving at the edge of the clearing, the scout stops, inspects, while his partner goes and informs the Commander, who decides what to do.

- Crossing a very frequented pathway :

- Avoid to cross it in a straight portion and place antenna-plugs on each side of the crossing point, at a good distance of it (40 to 60 m).

- Streams.... and rebel targets :

- The rebel implantations and the hamlets controlled by them are always near the streams.

- A friendly element following a stream (suoi) may be sure of not losing its time. Very soon he will finish by discovering a ford, a garden, the small barrage where the water-carriers tracks end, and this will become a suitable place of departure for a raid. If the element does not discover traces of life, it will report to the Territorial Commander negative information, but certainly interesting.

- How to lose one's trail :

- A light column can easily lose its trail, particularly at dusk.

Here is what to do:

a. The column establishes a plug, stops, turns left and proceeds in file as light as possible, a few hundred meters and then resumes its original direction of march.

To create a fake trail to the right.

b. The column marches obliquely through the water of a suoi, up-stream, for a minute. Not a single step on the banks! One leaves a discrete plug until night, near the place where the element emerged from the steamer

A FEW RULES

Stretchers : Never carry litters while marching in the forest, use instead hammocks or tent canvass set on a long pole.

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- Phosphorescent leaves : One finds them easily in the forest. By night one must use them. Hanging on the back of each man, they guide the man that follows. (Use these leaves if one does not have phosphorescent string).
- Raincoat : During the march wear preferably the raincoat turned inside out. The water runs out faster, the raincoat dries quicker and the men sweat less.
- Water liana : the natives know well this liana from which one can obtain one or two quarts of clear pure water.
- String and cord : carry always strong string and cord for a hundred uses without increasing the weight of the equipment
- Weapon lubricating oil : For any march of several days, particularly in the humid season, carry always a can of weapon lubricating oil wrapped on a piece of cloth.
- Eice : Carry a provision of rice, in a waterproof bag; otherwise it very soon becomes uneatable..

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CHAPTER VI

DEFENSE OF POSTS

AND CONCRETE SUPPORT

POINTS (1)

.....

Methods of Attack employed by the V.M.

From 4 V.M. Documents issued respectively in August 1952 and during 1953 (not exact date given).

..... The principles of attack are four in number:

1. Supperiority of fire and of assault forces. Minimum 3 to 1, but ideally 5 to 1.
 2. Prior to launching the attack, encirclement of the enemy formation in order to contain and fraction it.
 3. Do not disperse the resources by attacking several targets at a time. In the case of a group of blocks, proceed to their successive elimination by applying to each one the maximum of resources.
 4. React against the tendency to make an equal distribution of forces and means. In general, the main face of the attack must absorb 2/3 or 3/4 of the entire forces committed. The rest of the resources must be distributed among the secondary sides.
-

ARTICULATION OF FORCES

The unit Commander assembles all the cadres to pass on to them the order of attacking given by the upper echelon. The cadres organize then their units in accordance with the missions assigned.

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- (1) The items under this title must be supplemented by reading the illustrated brochure "THE POST", compiled by the F.T.S.V., to be published shortly by the F.A.V.N. in bi-lingual version.

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1. Organization of the Battalion charged of the attack proper

- 1.. Company charged of major missions
- 2.. Companies charged of secondary missions

2. Organization of the Company charged of the major missions

- 1st Shock Section
- 2nd Shock Section
- Section charged of secondary missions

3. Organization of a Shock Section

- 1 cell charged to clear the mines and of cutting the barbed wire (in case it is not convenient to use dynamite to cut the wires);
- 1 cell of continuous dynamiting (equipped with bamboo tubes filled with explosives to destroy barbed wire and with concentrated charges to demolish walls);
- 1 cell of grenadiers;
- 1 cell in charge of passing over obstacles (equipped with ladders sometimes 7 m long suitable for moats and to scale blockhouses);
- 1 cell of shock (armed with submachine guns).

.....

Note by the E.M.I.F.T.

In another document, the V.M. recommends a different articulation of the Company (or companies) charged of the major missions. The specialization of the Sections is as follows:

- Dynamiting and anti-obstacle Sections
- Shock Sections

These two types of missions are described in detail hereunder:

ROLE OF THE DYNAMITING AND ANTI-OBSTACLE UNIT

1. The mine detecting cell leads. It comprises 4 men, including the cell-head. The latter is armed with a submachine gun and is in charge of security. He carries powdered chalk to mark the terrain.

The three other men are equipped with wire cutters used both to cut the mine wires and the barbed wire. They use, besides, a branch of tree without leaves to explore the ground and detect the string of the mines. One of the three man carries a large piece of cloth to cover the entire cell against detection by flares.

The three men advance in file toward the target to be blown up. The cell head walks behind them. All men walk with bare legs and arms to better detect the strings of mines at the contact with the skin.

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The three men kneel down, set the tree branch to the ground level, carry the branch ahead a little above the ground. If a mine string hits the branch the men notice it at once. Thus, step by step, the cell progresses toward the target.

When a mine string is discovered, the men go to the mine itself by cautiously guiding themselves by the string. They use safety pins to immobilize the fuze pin, they unscrew the detonator or remove the mine itself, which is put aside. Whenever one of the men discovers a mine, he must immediately notify the rest of the men.

Once the mission accomplished, they report to the dynamiting cell and then march to the rear.

2. The dynamiting cell is equipped with "explosive tubes" the number of which varies in accordance with the importance of the Post enclosure. A previous study of the enclosure is then necessary; but the cell must always carry a reserve of explosive tubes. Each man is equipped with an explosive tube 2 meters long, containing approximately 5 to 6 kilos of explosives.

When the cell reaches a distance of about 15 meters from the enclosure, the first man advances, and deposits a charge by the enclosure at the point where the breach is wanted. He stands by ready to fuze the charge. When the artillery starts firing, or when he receives the order, he fires the explosive charge. To do that, he removes the string of the primer. When the sparks start, he falls back and lies flat on his face at the left of the second dynamiter, about one meter away. After the explosion of the first tube, the 2nd dynamiter runs forward to place a second charge against the enclosure, in the same direction of the breach. His work accomplished, the 2nd dynamiter goes back to his position in front of the 1st man.

The men in charge of dynamiting advance slowly keeping always at a distance of about 15 m from the enclosure. The operation continues until the crossing breach is opened in the enclosure.

3. The element in charge of passing over obstacles

It comprises 6 men, distributed in 2 cells and equipped with ladders (2) and 2 long poles (5 to 7 m long each). To penetrate the post, the moat is negotiated with one of the ladders, to climb up from it the second ladder is used (evacuation of prisoners and wounded men).

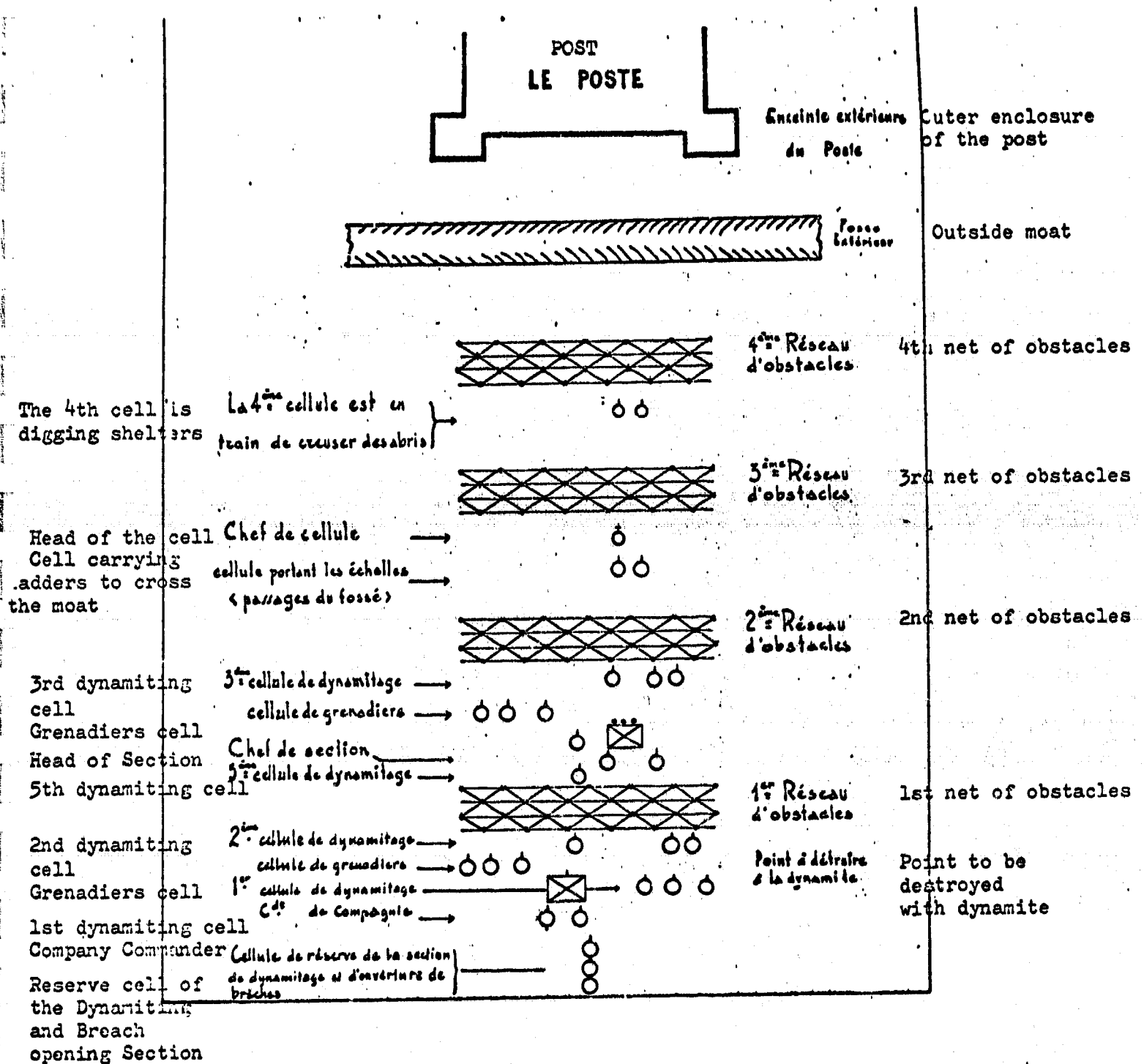
Movement of an anti-obstacle cell

The three men rush on the double toward the moat. The 1st one holds the pole, the other two hold the ladder one from each end. At the moat, the first man jumps to the other side of the moat by using the pole, which he then places obliquely across the moat. The second man places one end of the ladder on the pole. The first man then upholds the pole to facilitate the sliding of the ladder, while the 3rd man pushes it toward the other side of the moat. The second man crosses the moat over the ladder. When he reaches it he lies down flat on his face and holds the ladder. The other two men, outside the moat, one of them holds the ladder, the other the pole.

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EXAMPLE OF A SHOCK SECTION ARTICULATION



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4. The blockhaus dynamiting element

It comprises 4 dynamiters : 2 carrying a bamboo tube each filled with explosives and 2 carrying each a concentrated explosive charge. The weight of the concentrated charges varies in accordance with the thickness of the wall to be blown up.

Once the ladder is placed in position, the 1st dynamiter crosses the moat with the tube of explosives designed to destroy the net of barbed wire placed between the moat and the enclosure wall. He then withdraws and exchanges places with the 2nd dynamiter who completes the passage through the barbed wire by exploding another tube of explosives. Then comes the 3rd dynamiter carrying the concentrate charge. He selects the weakest spot in the blockhaus to place the charge (usually next to a loophole). He releases the firing mechanism while jumping back to the opposite side, and lies down at about 30 meters from the blockhaus.

After the first charge has exploded, the 4th dynamiter approaches the blockhaus. If the breach has already been opened, he passes the word to the troops in the rear. Otherwise, he continues to blast out the wall. After the second explosion, the attack element intervenes.

ROLE OF THE SHOCK UNIT

It consists in developing the combat inside the enemy formation, after the obstacles of the outer defense line have been destroyed (mines, enclosure, bamboo spikes) and the blockhaus located in the periphery has been demolished.

- Strength - The strength of the unit varies in accordance with the importance of the P.A.
- Armament - Each man carries a dynamite cartridge and 4 hand grenades; the cell Heads carry sub-machine guns, and the soldiers carry rifles and bayonets.
- The head section includes 4 groups:

One F.M. group and 3 assault groups, unlike the other sections that include only 3 groups (3 cells in each group).

When the charges planted at the periphery have produced effects, the shock unit takes advantage of it and rushes forward to take the blockhaus (bridgehead).

The head of the cell with 2 men goes toward the blockhaus, through the breach just opened or jumps over the roof of the blockhaus if it has already collapsed, the 2 men in the meanwhile hide one at each side of the blockhaus.

The head of the cell cleans up the inside of the blockhaus with a burst of submachine gun to exterminate any surviving enemy. The 2 men accompanying the cell head clean up the communication trenches with a hand grenade. Then they make liaison with their head. After having neutralized the blockhaus, the cell rejoins its unit in the pre-established direction. (This is the role of cell I).

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During this time, the other two cells which advanced after the first one, launch an attack on each side of the zone of action of the first cell. Then the three cells join. (Such is the action coordination of the three cells).

The head section or group very often try to direct a "point of attack" toward the center of the Post, in accordance with a pre-established plan. The center of the Post is usually where the Commander is located, or where the radio station is to be found. It is usually the meeting point of the various attack thrusts. There is where the various attack elements assemble before deploying again to execute the "sectioning tactics" which will finally exterminate the enemy.

During the advance through the communication trenches, the cell head marches amid his men in order to better command them. The head of the group marched behind a cell or between his 3 cells to better watch for all his men.

The submachine gun of the cell head is used to support the men who neutralize the emplacements of weapons and the trenches, by the use of hand grenades or dynamite cartridges.

PREPARING THE ATTACK

1. General Staff, Operational Bureau

- Instruct the Intelligence Service to obtain all data on the enemy post, on the surrounding terrain and to draw a map;
- Distribute the strength and the resources among the different units in accordance with the needs for the attack;
- Help the unit Commander to draw a project of attack plan. Schedule the net of telephone communications to be established.

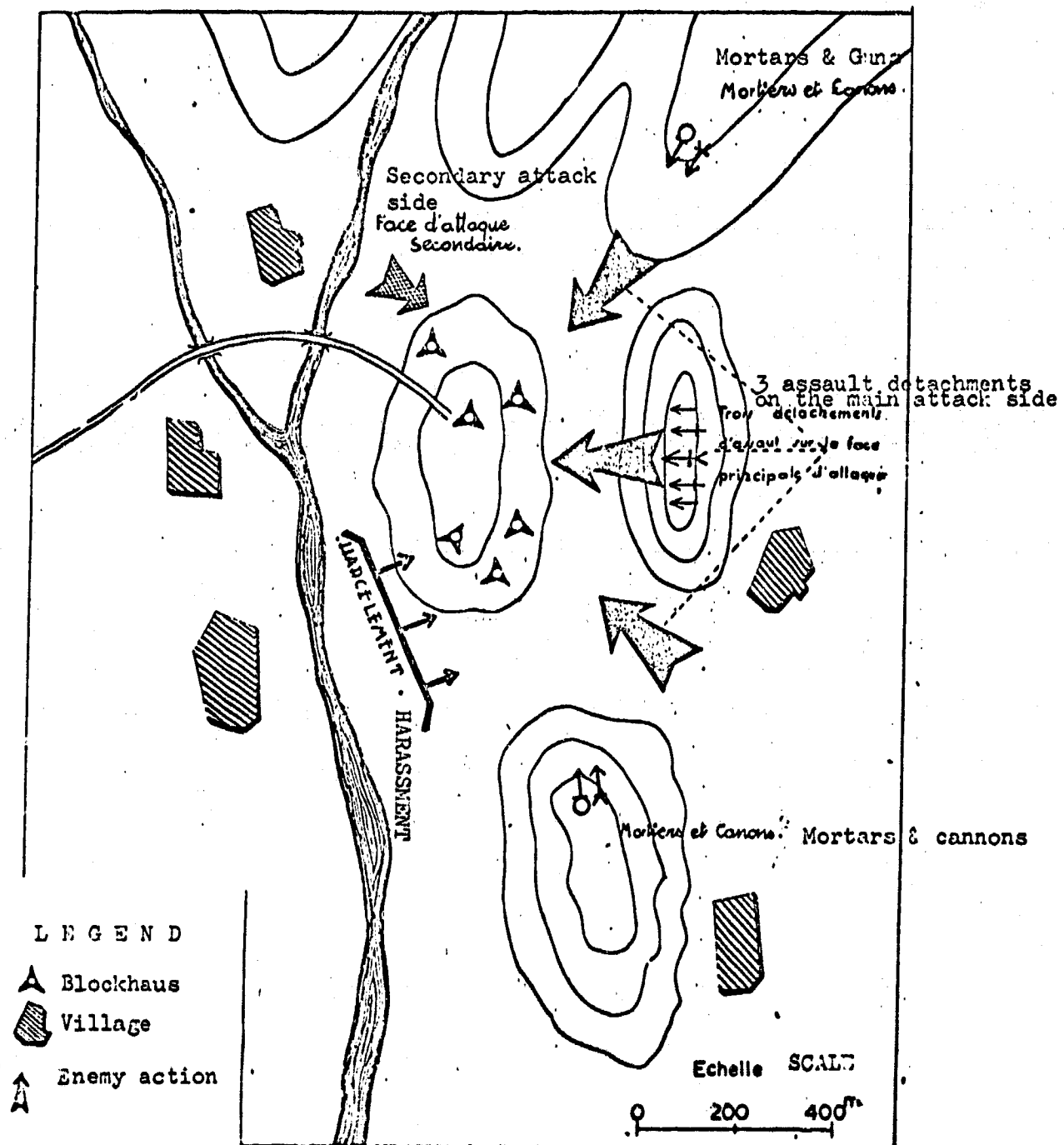
2. Supply and maintenance services

- The officers in charge of the supply estimate the reserve of rice with the aid of the UBKCHC of the villages near the post, taking into consideration the plan of attack drawn by the General Staff.
- The cadres in charge of armament prepare the arms and ammunition taking into consideration the situation of the enemy forces and the missions assigned to the different units.
- Other cadres contact the regional authorities to recruit the civilian labor necessary to transport the dead, the wounded, arms, ammunition and supplies.
- The Medical corps prepare the pharmaceutical products, the surgery instruments and the stretchers.

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EXAMPLE OF DISPOSITION FOR THE ATTACK TO A SUPPORT POST OF THE NEW TYPE



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3. Political action

One assembles the entire battalion or the entire company to set up a coordinated plan of mutual stimulation and to stipulate the slogans to be disseminated. One prepares a plan of action designed to maintain the morale of the troops after the combat (repress the feeling of pride after a victory and the dejection after a failure). Also prepare a propaganda plan directed to the population, a plan of evacuation of dead and wounded, and a plan to disseminate the news of victory.

4. Establishment of a plan of attack

- The cadres of the regiment, battalion and company assemble (during an entire day) to establish a plan of attack on the basis of the rough drawn by the intelligence service.
- The Head of the Battalion in charge of the attack and the cadres of the company come at night near the enclosure to study the terrain on the spot. The next day, they collaborate with the intelligence agents to set up a mock-up of the post on the sand box, to show the details to all the combatants.
- Finally, the cadres of the battalion and the company assemble to select the side of the main attack, and the secondary sides, and to assign the missions.

5. ORGANIZATION AND COMMAND OF THE FIRE BASES

To attack a support point defended by a Company, one needs field artillery (2 or 3 guns), 82 mm mortars, S.K.Z., explosive throwers, bazookas and (if possible) 12 mm7 guns.

This armament shall be added to the heavy weapons company of the Battalion in charge of the attack, to form a company of fire support, which will be put under the Associate Head of the Battalion or under the cadres of the Regiment assigned to aid the command of the Battalion.

If the fire bases thus constituted are insufficient, one can augment them with mortars of 60 mm and automatic rifles brought from the Reserve Company of the Battalion charged of the attack, or from the Reserve Battalion.

These arms put at the disposal of the Commander of the fire support Company, shall be distributed among several platoons in accordance with their specialty and missions (field artillery platoon, S.K.Z. platoon, 82 mm mortar platoon, 12 mm7 gun platoon, machine gun platoon.)

Role of the various weapons

The fire plan of the fire bases shall be set up taking into consideration the needs of the shock forces.

a. Field artillery (if needed, reinforced with a few S.K.Z.)

Major missions: Destruction of the weapon emplacements located in front of the breach to be opened, to help the shock forces in the assault of

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the blockhouses. In needed, the arms brought to the front line can be used to help the shock forces to take the double walls.

b. Mortars (82 and 60 mm).

Major missions: Destruction of the curved fire weapons emplaced at the center of the support point to create disorder and to annihilate a part of the enemy forces.

c. S.K.Z. - Bazookas - 12 mm7 guns. These weapons constitute the reserve forces of the support Company.

Major mission : Stay ready to advance toward the center of the support point to aid to the taking of the well-defended arms.

Secondary mission: Reinforce as needed be, the fire support element charged to attack the first enclosure, or the harrasment unit.

d. Machine guns.

Main mission : To neutralize the enemy weapons placed in front and on the flanks of our troops.

e. A group of automatic rifles formed with sharp shooters shall aid the machineguns and the fire support section of the shock company to neutralize the already located weapons or those being discovered.

Utilization and formation of the fire support forces

- Disposition of weapons -

In general, the filed artillery and the S.K.Z. are disposed slantly in relation to the breach. The 82 and 60 mm mortars are placed in the rear, between the two shock companies, slantwise to the latter. The machine guns are placed in line before the front side of the main attack.

The heavy machine guns of 12.7 mm, the Bazookas and the S.K.Z. will not be used, except in case of need, prior to the assault to the outer enclosure. They will be disposed, under the Commander of the support Company, in a covered place, behind the shock company or in the rear slantwise in relation to this company. In that position, they will be ready to fulfill their mission and to be pushed forward toward the interior of the support point.

6. DEPLOYMENT OF THE FIRE BASES

There are two types of deployment:

1. The fire base elements advance immediately after the main shock company and do not deploy until the shock company (having finished the reconnoitering of the forward enemy defenses) progress toward the departure point (they can also deploy at the same time with the shock company).

2. The support company, taking into consideration the route and terrain

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situation, marches following a special itinerary. Upon arriving at the vicinity of the post, each platoon shall occupy the position foreseen in accordance with its mission.

The formation to adopt is ruled by the shape of the terrain. But, whatever the formation, one must watch the following:

1. First of all position the artillery before installing the heavy machine guns. The curved fire weapons shall be installed separately and shall be able to gain its combat position all at the same time.

In the event the general situation or the terrain force to install the curved fire weapons on the same side faced by the shock forces of flat-trajectory fire, the former shall be always installed behind. In general, allow the flat-trajectory fire weapons (mainly the field artillery) which must be installed on the front line, reach their combat position before the curved-fire weapons, which are installed on the second line.

2. The distance between the fire base positions and the first enemy enclosure, varies with the terrain and the circumstances; it is impossible to determine it in advance. In principle, however, it must be the shortest possible.

3. Dig shelters immediately after the occupation of the combat positions. Dig first the shelters for the weapons; then, those for the ammunition and the combatants.

4. The gunners and the servers of each weapon, and those serving the field artillery shall take shelter in individual pits dug behind the respective weapon, along a single line, and slantwise regarding the weapon.

COMMAND AND LIAISON

The fire support company is put at the disposal of the shock battalion Commander.

The company is in liaison with the shock company and follows the recommendations of the latter's company commander. The field artillery platoon head remains in direct contact with the Commander of the shock Company. Otherwise, the liaison is made by telephone (the element of fire support installed on the secondary side is placed under the direct orders of the Infantry Commander of such side).

TIME AND SIGNAL TO OPEN FIRE

The time to open fire is usually established in advance. After the start of the attack, the support unit all remain at all moments ready to open fire at the first signal.

The best signals to use are: the field artillery goes into action in hearing the first dynamite explosion fused by the shock forces; the rest of the forces shall open fire on hearing the artillery reports. (Thus when the artillery fires, all fire will be opened at the same time

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and the surprise effect shall be best obtained than by means of any other signal).

- The various weapons shall fire in the following order: field artillery (or S.K.Z.), 82 and 60 mm mortars, heavy and light machine guns.

- The method of firing varies for each weapon in accordance with the mission:

The field artillery fire and the S.K.Z. must be brutal, close and executed by volleys. It shall be opened at the same time with the dynamiting of the obstacles. The guns shall be concentrated to fire volleys of 3 or 4 rounds, with the purpose of destroying as quick as possible the enemy weapons installed in the vicinity of the breach to be opened.

The various weapons shall continue to fire blow after blow on the breach being opened, while the obstacles outside the moat are being destroyed.

Then the guns will resume the firing by volleys of 2 or 3 rounds, to complete the destruction of the weapons placed near the breach. When the breach is open, the field artillery shall intervene from both sides or they will fire on the central blockhaus.

The 82 and 60 mm mortars shall fire to crush the center of the post. At the beginning they will concentrate to fire by volleys of 2 or 3 rounds. Afterwards, the various cells (each cell has 2 or 3 mortars) shall coordinate to fire at the rate of 2 or 3 rounds per minute. Do not stop firing until the occupation by the shock forces, of the first enclosure.

The machine guns are used to neutralize the emplacements of weapons located facing the troops or on the flanks.

While the field artillery fires on the first enclosure, use only a limited number of machine guns to neutralize the enemy weapons being discovered. When the field artillery stops firing, the machine guns open their fire, all at the same time, against the emplacements of weapons facing our troops, thus assuring the protection of the shock forces. In all case, long bursts are forbidden. Machine guns must only fire short bursts, after careful aiming. Also forbidden is to direct the machine gun fire on the breach, to avoid firing on the back of the shock troops.

The F.M. (or the best shooters) constitute the fire support of the mobile fires. Their main mission consists in neutralizing the emplacements of weapons hidden in the vicinity of the breach and to eliminate the enemy grenadiers. They remain in close contact with the shock forces and shall display the maximum bravery and thrust.

- Displacement of fire and of weapons - The fire support unit is charged to protect the shock forces not only until the occupation of the first enclosure, but until the complete annihilation of the enemy. So, before and after the occupation of the first enclosure, it will be convenient to shift some weapons.

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In case of need or at the request of the shock company, one detachment of S.K.Z., bazookas or 12.7 mm guns, shall move to the interior of the P.A., and there it will be placed under the orders of the Commander of the shock Company.

After occupying the first enclosure, a machine gun or F.M. detachment, if so needed, will move to the interior of the P.A. Since it is difficult to move the machine gun detachment, usually the F.M. shall enter the P.A. alone and then they will be put under the orders of the Commander of the shock Company.

- The problem of lighting - In the case of unfavorable terrain and darkness, it will be convenient to light the terrain to be able to aim. This lighting is obtained by flares (flare tubes locally manufactured) lit by the infiltrated combatants within the defense enemy lines, and also by the burst of the 82 and 60 mm mortar shells.

NOTE by the E.M.I.F.T.

In one of its documents one can find other indications as to the disposition of the resources prior to the initiation of the assault. They are reproduced hereunder.

ON THE MARCH FOR OPERATIONS

Assembly of the entire Battalion in a village or in a terrain at 7 to 10 kilometers from the post. The head of the Battalion issues the latest instructions, reminds the combatants of their duty, emphasizes the advantages and disadvantages of the operation. The various units pledge to fulfill their missions. Then, about 8:00 or 9:00 P.M. the march starts. One must arrive to the post at 10:00 or 10:30 PM.

OCCUPATION OF A DEPARTURE BASE

- Quickly occupy the departure base in order to avoid ambushes, patrols and enemy artillery fire.
- Approach the enemy with resources rather powerful.
- Proceed immediately to open one or more breaches.

a. Before occupying the departure base, it is important:

- To carefully study the configuration of the terrain and the avenues of approach.
- To be informed on the enemy habits and activities to ward against ambushes. Endeavor to capture prisoners.

b. During the march:

- To have forward one or more scout detachments with arms, to ferret out the traps.
- Have the gross of the forces follow one or more secret itineraries, selecting the more difficult ones to negotiate. Avoid the places more frequently beaten by the enemy artillery, as well as the terrains having in the past attracted much attention from the enemy.
- March silently in order not to warn the enemy.

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- The assault elements march toward the barbed wire nets digging out emplacements as they advance. No need to dig out elaborated or perfect emplacements, since the first man leaves it unfinished, the second man continues to dig it and to advance, and so successively with the rest of the men.

- c. During the occupation of the departure base, telephone connections are established between the units, but one must react against the bureaucratic mentality which supposes that all the information is to be received by phone and that one must accept what comes from the higher level without sending the cadres to check all information.

.....

COMBAT INSIDE THE ENEMY POSITION

- a. Maintaining and widening a breach.

The maintainance and widening of a breach decide the result of the combat. Depending whether this phase of the battle is conducted swiftly or slowly, or weakly or strongly, the combat is a success or a failure.

Mistakes to avoid:

- Heaping at the breach.
- Penetration lacking boldness; any hesitation permits the enemy to recover itself, to reassemble its forces and to organise flank fire which stop the advance, causes casualties and isolates the assailants already within the position, forcing them to fight alone or to flee and abandon the combat.

How to act :

1. Reinforce the action of the head group with F.M. fire to quickly neutralize the enemy weapons which at this moment reveal themselves. It is necessary to have the shock Section equipped with a supplementary F.M. to support the head group in reducing the enemy weapons which may be revealing themselves. This will help the group to develop the combat inside the enemy formation.
2. Once the breach is opened, proceed decisively to destroy or neutralize the fire positions located in the flanks. The enemy concentrates its fire on the breach, to clog it and stop the advance.

Arrange the defense work, so to serve as springboard to develop the combat within the formation.

Take all the necessary measures to ward off an eventual counter-attack.

Arrange a security passageway so that the attack forces can easily advance.

3. In case of field fortification works, after having gone through the breach, one must resolutely develop the combat inside the enemy formation, which evidently is strong in the outer enclosure but weak in the inside.

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b. Encirclement and sectionment

As an answer to our attack, the enemy often resorts to take cover in a redoubt.

If it considers the resistance impossible, it tries to flee. It is essential then to encircle the enemy to fraction it in small elements to annihilate them more easily.

The measures to take are:

1. Proceed to the encirclement, if possible before the combat or when the combat develops itself inside the position.

Estimate the forces necessary to accomplish the encirclement and verify its positioning before opening fire. It is important that the units charged of the encirclement be aware of the importance of their mission and that they complete all preparations prior to the opening of the fire.

The units assigned to an encirclement mission shall not be otherwise assigned.

2. Establish an assembly point for the units assigned to sectionment. It must be clearly determined. (P.C., main blockhaus).

The various groups shall endeavor to quickly assemble there, ere the enemy may have time to fall back to it.

Proceed to the sectionment of the enemy forces, from island to island; then fraction the islands.

Cover all points, neglecting none, through which the enemy can escape.

3. The various "tip elements" must act energetically, swiftly and with assuredness, to deeply penetrate the enemy formation.

The defense works taken from the enemy must serve to develop the combat.

Avoid to get harassed uselessly, on open terrains.

The resistance nests must be subdued while advancing.

The attack must be conducted in depth, because the edges of the enemy formation might be strong, but weak in the interior.

The tactics to employ then consists in concentrating the resources to penetrate the heart of the formation, then in dispersing them on all directions to assault the outer rear edge.

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Evacuation of dead and wounded

The stretcher bearers (civilian labor) stop with their stretchers and hammocks at about 500 meters from the post and get ready to accomplish their missions.

Reinforcement interception

The units charged to intercept the enemy reinforcements get to the places selected for the ambushes.

When the occupation of the combat positions is completed by all units, the Command orders to open fire. The order is usually given by midnight or 00:30.

R E T R E A T

When the operation ends, the retreat is effected in the following order: artillery, unit in charge of main mission, unit in charge of secondary missions, stretch bearers, civilian labor, and finally the unit in charge of intercepting the reinforcements. One may return to the point of departure or fall back to another locality.

If the attack fails

Generally one falls back following an other itinerary different from the previous one. The unit charged of the main mission picks up its own wounded and dead, transports them up to a place located 500 m or 1 km from the battlefield, and there the stretch bearers take over to take the wounded to the hospital and bury the dead.

The rest of the units (artillery, heavy weapons) also fall back while the units in charge of secondary missions lay out an ambush 300 or 500 m from the battlefield, against possible pursuit by the enemy. Each unit selects its own itinerary to return to its old point of implantation.

If the attack is only a partial victory

Example: One succeeds only in destroying 3 of the 5 blockhaus.

The unit in charge of the main mission remains in position, to continue the combat in full day light or to resume it the following night. The units in charge of intercepting the reinforcements remain also in position, to stop the relief troops.

There are cases when the unit in charge of the main mission cannot remain within the blockhaus taken from the enemy, and in such event the unit withdraws to a neighboring village, digs shelters and organizes a very close surveillance while waiting for night to resume the attack.

Upon arriving at the new implantation point, usually one proceeds immediately to dig shelters. The tired soldiers sometimes neglect this precaution.

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ON RETURNING FROM AN ATTACK

- Reorganize the unit to make it able again for combat.
 - Organize meetings to recapitulate experiences from each cell, each section, each company and each battalion to draw profitable lessons.
 - Organize a general meeting to evaluate the merits or the faults of the cadres and combattants.
-

PARTICULARITIES REGARDING

THE ATTACK TO A FORTIFIED POSITION OF THE NEW TYPE

The method of attack is based on the following principles:

1. The principal roles are played by the fire support forces (75 mm cannons, heavy machine guns, S.K.Z., bazookas) and the dynamite squad. The assault forces play only a secondary role.
 2. It is not necessary to commit too many troops.
 3. The attack must be conducted slowly, cautiously, stage by stage and without disorder.
 4. At every change of position, both outside the first enclosure and inside the enemy formation, shelters must be built.
 5. The fire support forces must mainly devote themselves to the neutralization of the weapons positioned on the flanks of our troops, and then to neutralize the weapons facing us.
 6. One must seek protection against the air-burst shells.
-

It does not exist an specific unit charged of terrain organization, of shelter and communication trenches construction. The attack unit does all that.

Operation usually develop in the following manner:

- a. Approximately 1 or 2 hours in advance, accordingly with the nature of the terrain, the various attack echelons take position near the fortification to be attacked, the dynamite squad being placed close to the enclosure of the post. During this time, the mission consists in digging (pits for trenches);
 - b. Artillery preparation starts. Simultaneously, the elements charged to open the breaches go into action;
 - c. The artillery preparation ended, the assault elements go through the breaches already opened and act as described above. The elements of the 2nd echelon come to occupy the place left by the assault elements and continue the preparation of the terrain initiated by the latter.
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FAULTS DISCOVERED

---AMONGST CADRES AND COMBATANTS

Most of the cadres and combatants, have not, before the engagement, properly prepared, as one must, their individual arms and ammunition.

Explosives: Have not be handled carefully enough. One neglected to carry safety primers; explosives were wrapped in fresh and humid leaves; hand grenades were carried in torn bags and many were lost. In other instances, rifles were unusable because one neglected to clean the sand or mud from the barrel after its user had a fall or crossed a stream.

Dynamite squad: In the combat at X ..., the squad made up a ladder too long and too heavy which had to be abandoned on the way; the men had neglected to carry canvass to cover the barbed wire on passing over its nets; gabions were of all imaginable dimensions, either too small or too large to attract the attention of the enemy.

The group cadres have not verified closely enough whether their men were actually prepared. They merely gave orders without even checking the condition of the rifles and the cartridges, the real guarantee of the combatants safety during combat.

1. Conquest of the terrain under enemy fire

Faults - Many among us did not know how to take advantage of a terrain accident or did not realize the importance represented by a combat formation. Example: A large log was lying in front of a breach; it could have at the most offer shelter to two cells; two groups piled up behind this log offering an ideal target for the enemy; hand grenades killed 2 men and wounded 3. An unimaginable disorder ensued: dynamite squad men mixed with shock elements, shock elements mixed with F.M. riflemen and to artillery men.

When it became necessary to occupy secretly a terrain, many of us did not deem it necessary to crawl or to lay down flat while advancing; they preferred to reach the target as quick as possible, which meant trouble for all. Some, when the enemy fired, even threw themselves down on flat ground without seeking the slightest cover.

In the X and Y combats, no field defense work whatsoever was built up. The excuses given were: lack of picks and shovels, considered a loss of time given the frequent displacements... If enemy air force had intervened in the X and Y battles, we would have had to regret such lack of precautions.

The maintain of secrecy greatly contributed to the success at X....; we had gone over the first line of barbed wire, and the enemy had not yet discovered our presence.

2. Destruction of barriers and dynamite squad action

At the X combat, the breach was not opened at the point indicated by the Command. Once the barbed wire was crossed over, we engaged

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ourselves to destroy the walls, instead of attacking the blockhaus, as the combat plan demanded. Furthermore, the explosives were not properly placed against the walls, which diminished the effects of the explosion.

At the Z combat, we destroyed the blockhaus instead of demolishing the walls, which put in the pathway of the shock elements the beams and debris from the crumbled blockhaus.

One was dead set to destroy any obstacle in view, without thinking that it was perhaps unnecessary or even dangerous.

Combat formation : At X it was faulty. Each time one saw an advantageous terrain accident, there was a rush for it, without any concern for order: dynamite squad men mixed with F.M. riflemen, shock elements mixed with artillery men, etc.

In principle, dynamite squad men must stay al left, the F.M. riflemen at right. At X, one ran in all directions and each one took the place considered more convenient; there was no actual combat formation.

In that combat, 3 were killed and 3 wounded while opening the breach. The cadres and the dynamite men did not think of what to properly do immediately. Instead of waiting for instructions, as they did, which was superfluous under the circumstances, they should have had the wounded evacuated to the rear, reorganize the dynamite squad and continue to open the breach (any dynamite man worth this name must take the place of the comrade put out of action).

To reach a blockhaus, a dynamite man slid through the barbed wires, and failed to recommend to his companions to destroy them after he had gone through. Should we had been forced to retreat, our withdrawal would had been stopped by these wires and our own fault (should our machine guns and F.M. had not been able to overcome the enemy fire).

If the fire from the machine guns, the F.M., the 60,82,120 mortars, and the S.K.Z., represents very often a valuable support, some other times have hampering inconvenients. They are, for the dynamite squad men and the shock elements, a very effective aid in the opening of a breach or to raze the center of the enemy formation, provided they hit just their target (combat at X). On the contrary, at the Y combat many of us were killed or wounded by our own artillery, whose fire was badly adjusted.

Consequently, what the Infantry requests from the Artillery is precision of fire. Among all the heavy units having participated in the recent combats, only the S.K.Z. have responded to the request of the shock elements and dynamite squad men. The latter do not trust anymore our curved fire, since they suffered from it at the Y.... combat.

Qualities : In spite of defective combat formation, our dynamite squad men have always attacked with exemplary courage and cold blood. Private Duc particularly distinguished himself at Y: once the breach was open, he rushed inside the post and firing a 8 kg charge, demolished an underground hideout in which a captain was buried under. The shock elements then finished the survivors.

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COMBAT WITHIN A POST

..... Among other faults, we advanced pell-mell in close formations through the dug-out communications without stooping; we neglected to place a sentry at each one of the angles (the sentry itself, when one was assigned, decided to join the combat believing he was more useful fighting than remaining in guard).

Avoid: To advance in straight line toward the center of the post without searching the surroundings.

Do not neglect to search all post buildings; to bent in passing in front of windows or doors (some of our men stood in front of a door to call and invite the enemy to surrender).

Attack to resistance nests : We did not have experience in searching for weapons emplacements.

Having the first cell razed a weapon emplacement, the following cell amused itself throwing hand grenades into it and firing several volleys of P.M. One shot at will against any suspicious place. One insisted on a point when it was evidently unnecessary. Privat Fap, seeing a riflemen run away, he amused himself firing his rifle in the air. One threw grenades where one should have used dynamite cartridges.

Prisoners of war : A great imprudence was committed recently by us, when upon disarming prisoners of war we left with them some equipment and even hand grenades. Besides, they were left badly bound and mixed with the wounded (enemy and friendly). Should some French officer have been among the wounded, some disagreeable incident would have had to be feared.

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SECURITY MEASURES TO BE OBSERVED IN POSTS AND IN CONCRETE FORTIFIED SUPPORT POINTS

From a Note by the General Command of the F.T.N.V. dated
May 20, 1952

.....The barbed wire nets must be sufficiently wide in order not to be destroyed in depth by a single lengthened charge.

Drain ditches must be blocked with a dense net of barbed wire; the doors and cross-wood obstacles at the entrances of zig-zag trenches, must be sufficient in number, thick, and solidly connected with the wire networks.

FORTIFIED GUARDBOUSES

In the concrete support points, the guardhouse teams must be trained for their particular functions and for replacement assignments.

Guardhouses must be clear off from any superfluous materials (boxes, pilings, etc.) which may obstruct the view of the loopholes.

Ventilation system must be frequently checked with vents unencumbered and ammunition allotted so not to crowd accessibility.

HEAVY WEAPONS

Heavy arms (cannons with turret, 12.7 machine guns, mortars) require specialized personnel, with up to date and advanced instruction. There must be replacing personnel at all levels (chief of piece section, gunner, server).

Fire directions must be set by reference marks, terrain must be sketched and ranged, with the angular deviations calculated in advance for all the points to be pounded. One must device a camouflaged lighting system for the stock fire plate. One must prepare magazines to keep ammunition dry and protected against the enemy fire. Personnel must be educated to observe a strict fire discipline; the cadres must acquire a permanent sense of control of the firing tempo.

ARRANGEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION POSTS

A telephone and a radio set are not enough for a support point Commander to carry out his combat commanding. Communication posts and observatories must be completely equipped with:

- Board for artillery fire plan tracings and panoramic sketches of the neighboring terrain with all the characteristic distances,
- Camouflaged lighting,
- Mining records, etc.

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ARTILLERY

Artillery support is one of the basic factors to the defense. However, to be efficient, the fire must be requested at the proper time (a matter of radio liaison); its application point must be clearly definite and its hit assured.

a. Designation of the targets :

If the registration of fire to the immediacy of the post can be done, it is not so with the fire on the departure bases, the fire bases and the enemy reserves of position essentially variable. These targets must be then localized and designated by the head of the Post, at the needed moment and with the maximum precision. Such designation shall be facilitated by:

- the establishment (in cooperation with the artillery) of a large-scale plan of the post and its accesses, on which a number of characteristic points shall be marked. These points shall be given a number and a name.
- the establishment of a well-equipped observatory.

b. Location of fire

The above plan having been established, with the control of fire on one of these characteristic points (control point) will serve to determine the elements on any other point around the post.

If the control point has been selected so that it can be seen from the commanding post, in a direction substantially perpendicular to the bearing of the battery fire, it can then be observed by the Chief of the post himself.

c. Release of fire

The Chief of Post who requests a fire indicates the kind of fire he desires (cover fire, stop fire), the number and name of the place on which the fire must be directed. If the fire does not coincide with the points selected, the chief indicates it by interpolation between the two numbered and named points.

The head of the Posts and the assistants eventually called to replace him, must train themselves for these fire requests in order to be able to execute them properly at the right moment. They will have to know the terrain perfectly so to be able to indicate the location of the enemy positions with extreme accuracy. It is a matter of training.

RADIO LIAISON

The posts lacking the means to secure a permanent radio listening, must study an alarm system to be able to effect the immediate release of:

- automatic arms fire at a particular tempo,
- shell fire, etc.

The radio liaison being of vital interest, all effort must be made to obtain a perfect operation:

- frequent verification,
- alarm tests (immediate opening of fire)

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- spare battery cells protected against humidity,
- spare antennas,
- stations protected against enemy raids.

SECURITY MEASURES

Beyond the absolute value of its defensive organization and means at its disposal, the post security depends to a great extent on the activity and alertness of the garrison.

By day :

- permanent guard of the entrance points,
- control of all coolie and civilian traffic,
- surveillance of the barbed wire net,
- frequent patrols, each time different, operating in depth as much as possible, numerous liaisons with the neighboring units (know well the limits of their zone of action).

A garrison that does not go out is always under the risk of surprise. Maintain within the post a small security garrison (distrust the siesta hour - the enemy knows our habits and how to profit from them).

By night :

- an alert guard service; minimum one watch per blockhaus; double sentries at the entrance and at the zig-zag trenches. Single sentry system has been one of the causes of losing a post, since one sentry can be silently eliminated and when the enemy is discovered it can be already too late.
- bells alarm system
- patrols, ambushes (within the post heavy weapon protection limits)
- strict camouflage of lights at night. Interdiction of the use of flash lights at the relief of the guard. (The V.M. declares that our posts are easily detected by the lights).
- interdiction of all noises (singing, music, etc,) after the curfew hour; by this a post can be as easily detected as by lights, and this make the work of the watcher difficult.

The above rules shall be assiduously observed and enforced by the cadres. Frequent controls and strict observance of details shall stimulate the use and the elimination of negligence.

It is highly important that:

That the head of the Post succeeds in winning the confidence of the neighboring villages. He must have an information service of his own, devoted to collect all sort of data affecting this good relations between the villages and the post. These agents, or friendly villagers, should be able to inform him of any V.M. menace, patrol, or ambush against the post. A signal code must be established: linen of different colors hanging in a visible way from the post, light signals directed to the post, agricultural instruments or another conventional object, disposed in a special way, to indicate a mine or an ambush being laid somewhere, etc, etc.

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WARDING OFF AGAINST VIET MINH

RECENT METHODS OF ATTACK

Abstracts from a Note by the General Commander in Chief dated Nov. 13, 1953, and from a Note by the FTNV General Commander, dated August 26, 1952.

.....Since the last campaign, the adversary has reinforced the power of its weapons, a fact that can affect the attack to our concrete fortified support points :

- Increase of the number and power of hollow charge arms (S.K.Z., bazookas of various caliber). 1) NOTE - See in the Annex the average effective range of these weapons).
- Increase of the actual number of 81 mortars with which regional units are now frequently equipped. 1)
- Increase of 12.7 machine guns, used not only for air defense but also for ground fire. 1)
- Introduction of caliber 20 mm in air defense.
- Introduction at the Tonkin delta battlefield of 105 guns and 120 mortars with ammunition in sufficient amounts.

The enemy, furthermore, attaches a very particular interest to the offensive use of explosive charges (hollow or normal) used massively for the destruction of obstacles or blockhaus.

.....
The result of these increases and innovations will materialize in the fact that our posts will be attacked with a violence, rapidity and accuracy such as never before attained.
.....

To counteract this tactics, we must first of all convince our cadres that the V.M. attacks with determination only those posts on which they possess complete information.

a. The first requirement, then, for post security is its hermetic seal against enemy investigation. Nobody, except the affected authorities, must be allowed to enter or get near any defense works.

No coolie (except P.I.Ms. engaged in the works, from which should never go out unescorted), no civilians must be used at the interior of

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the post, under no pretext whatever. Around the post, the paddy fields must lie fallow and deserted.

Relations between the post military personnel and the civilian population of the vicinity must be surveilled and controlled. The rules on discretion and counter-espionage matters must be checked and completed by the chief of the post.

b. Security system outside the post: patrols and particularly alarm bells at night; measures to be enforced maximum in all directions.

If the patrols leave the post before dusk (which is normal because of the distances they must cover), they should not go directly to the observations points, but wait until night to get there by a lateral or fall back movement.

c. The enemy usually has the attack units preceded by orientators who are charged of reconnaissance and of pointing out the itineraries of approach. Very often they are guerrilla men or D.K. from the neighboring villages; sometimes they are women or even children, who operate by day. Patrols and post observers must therefore watch closely all activity in the paddy fields, within a radius of 2 to 3 km from the post. Any clue must immediately be reported and any suspicious individual must be arrested.

d. Modifications, sometimes even of minor importance, made in the post defense system, may be sufficient to disconcert the V.M. preparations or even to lead it to renounce to the attack. Among these modifications, are included those introduced at the mine fields (extension, displacement), new barbed wire nets, combat shelters, field type, outside the walls; and whenever possible, change of orientation of the loopholes in order to modify the axis of fire and the battered zone, etc.

After the start of the attack, the post Commander must essentially play the variable elements of defense which the enemy could not have foreseen in all their aspects. These variable elements are mainly:

- The fire supports coming from the outside,
- The counter-attacks from the inside.

a. The fire support from the outside, particularly the artillery fire, come from the neighboring posts. After the start of the attack, the post Commander in this particular and essential function must make use of the variety of fire support in accordance with the development of the combat: shifting the stop fire to menaced places, bringing it as close as possible and not hesitating to order time fire against the post when the enemy, having gone over the defenses, is fully uncovered.

The head of the Post should be particularly careful not to be taken in by the feints and fake attacks staged by the enemy to distract his attention; he also must avoid the temptation to request the artillery to neutralize the enemy fire bases, to the detriment of the stop fire, even if the assaults appears momentarily stopped.

The purpose of the defense is to break the assault waves.

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b. From the moment when the enemy has been able to pass over the accessory defenses, the only hope for the post rests on the effectiveness of the counter-attacks. The effectiveness depends on timing and violence. The counter-attacks must have been prepared in all detail, rehearsed over and over, by day, by night, under bad weather, amid the smoke, under any hypothesis that may concur with the possible penetration of the enemy forces (side, angle, etc.)

This careful training of the counter-attack combatants must respond to that of the enemy shock units. This training, added to the perfect knowledge of the terrain, must assure the superiority.

c. When the enemy has been ejected from the post, the automatic arms (F.M. or P.M.) as well as grenadiers are positioned to batter frontally and from a close distance, the breaches opened in the accessory defenses. As soon as possible, the breaches must be obstructed (Ribard nets, cross-wood frames, caltrops). The interior of the post is searched and cleared.

If the attack is suspended, any moment of respite is used to reorganize the defense and rebuild the counter-attack reserve. The stop fires are shifted to sweep the terrain of attack and prevent the enemy to recover its arms, wounded and dead.

If a post falls, the artillery supporting it must continue without stopping to fire against the post. The fire continues until dawn when the aircraft arrives over the objective, and should consist of volleys irregularly spaced (interdiction expenditure). 1) (NOTE - This method has already permitted to recover, the next day, part of the garrison which kept in the defensive in isolated shelters, preventing the V.M. to take hold of the armament and ammunition.)

— The disengagement operations designed to recover a fallen post, must not be limited to directly thrust against the post a relief unit. If means are available, the operations must include offensive actions against the areas of possible refuge for the V.M. units having participated in the attack. The orientation and width of these actions are governed by the fall-back itineraries of the V.M. forces and by the time on which the attack has been suspended.

One must not forget that the enemy not always considers the attack to a post its main objective. The final objective often consists in the destruction by ambush of the relief units, the seizure of the post being just a minor military objective to lure our elements.

Bear in mind that for the V.M. the terrain's importance is only in direct relation with its possibilities to hold it. Its goal is the destruction of our combat resources, the capture of armament en ammunition, etc.

The relief detachment action must then be conducted with perfect coordination. It will be the more sure and effective the less the enemy expects its direction and shape.

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RULES APPLICABLE TO RECENT FORTIFICATIONS

1. The entrances to fortification works have always been a weak point.

It has already been prescribed that the access trenches must have at the immediate proximity of the fortification works, a straight portion of about 20 meters, battered in enfilade from the watch loophole or from the rotula loopholes behind the defense works.

2. It is evident that the observatories constitute a weak point. Those already existing, must be protected up to the level of the loopholes by one or two rows of sand bags.

3. The V.M. attacks preferably the central defense works which constitute the knot of the defense of our support points. Then, the protection and the defense of these central works must be organized.

- a. By surrounding and covering them with barbed wire nets.

- b. By clearing every time possible the fire fields between the center and the periphery, so to be able to batter the central works and their approaches from the watching loopholes or from the defense loopholes behind the peripheric works.

- c. By compartmenting the interior of them (compartment surrounding central works, at about 80 meters).

- d. By scheduling fire and counter-attack missions for the reserve P.A. elements, to the benefit of the central points.

4. Against the attempts of the assaillant to obstruct the fortification aeration vents, the only remedy is to prevent the enemy to set foot to the fortifications; hence the need of a barbed wire net surrounding and covering the works, and of scheduling reciprocal support fire between the various blocks, as well as the need to clear the grenade-throwing portholes that may have been obstructed.

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V.M. AMBUSH TACTICS AGAINST ELEMENTS

COMING TO DISENGAGE A POST

Note by the E.M.I.F.T. dated March 10, 1954

The V.M. Command has a tendency to generalize the attacks to posts with interception of the reinforcements, as a more profitable method than the simple attack to a post, which may be costly.

The scene of the attack to the post (with minor strength compensated by the augmentation of fire resources) continues to be the same as used up to now, already well-known.

Conversely, the particular ambush recommended to intercept the reinforcements coming by land (called movement ambush) is something very special, worth studying in detail. From the analysis of its mechanism we will be able to draw the remedies against the same.

FORMATION OF THE AMBUSH

The ambush extends over 3 to 4 km of road and is articulated in three elements:

- One fixed element (the less important one: 1 Company) on both sides of the road through which the reinforcement column must pass. It is the head plug, which the V.M. calls 2nd element.
- Two mobile elements : the 1st one, or main attack element (5 companies) remains in waiting position in the villages on both sides of the road, at a distance between 8 to 1,200 meters.

The 3rd element (3 companies) or rear plug remains also in waiting position at about 1 km of the road.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMBUSH

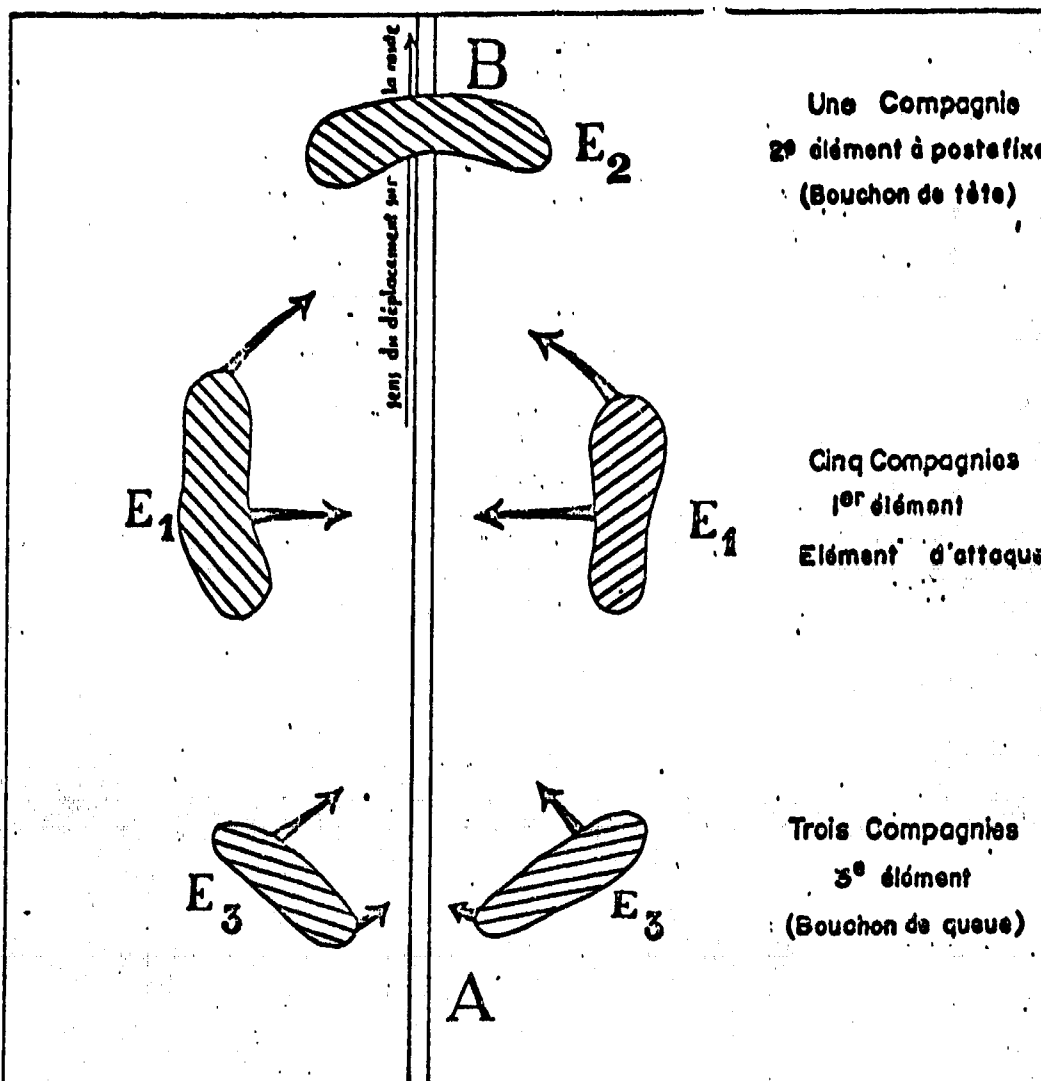
When the head element of the column to be destroyed reaches Point A without incident and when the gross of the column moves between A and B, the rear plug (3rd element) leaves its waiting emplacements and takes position, at the advancing rate of the column. The first element does likewise.

When the column reaches point B, the 2nd element located in fixed position, gives the signal to open fire. At this moment, the encirclement is practically effected and the elements have the following missions:

- E. 3 : To cut the fall-back way of the column.
to intercept any relief unit.
- E. 1 : To fraction the column into elements and reduce them successively.
- E. 2 : To face the forces and prevent any escape.

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Une Compagnie
2^e élément à poste fixe
(Bouchon de tête)

One Company
2nd element (fixed)
(Head plug)

Cinq Compagnies
1^{er} élément
Elément d'attaque

Five Companies
1st element
Attack element

Trois Compagnies
3^e élément
(Bouchon de queue)

Three Companies
3rd element
(Rear plug)

REMARKS

- The friendly column advances from A toward B
AB : 3000 to 4000 m
- The 2nd element E.2 is fixed
- The 1st and 3rd elements are camouflaged in the villages and move when the column is engaged

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GENERAL WARDING OFF

MEASURES

1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTELLIGENCE NETWORK

The V.M. estimates that 3 or 4 days of reconnaissance in the region is quite sufficient: such a period should permit our intelligence services to detect the action planned by the enemy in the territory.

If the Commander of the sub-Sector or the head of the Post have planted intelligence agents in the surrounding villages and the villages bordering the itineraries, counter-measures can be taken. Of course, the surprise effect will be missing.

2. VARIATIONS IN THE ITINERARY, THE STRENGTH, and THE FORMATION

In a given area, the importance of the disengagement column, the itinerary followed and the formation adopted must never be the same twice in succession.

3. FIRE SUPPORT OF THE DISENGAGEMENT COLUMN

In principle, the reinforcing troops should be able to have artillery support, armor, and a reconnaissance plane assigned in advance. If weather does not permit the hunting sortie, the presense of armor is obligatory.

4. ORGANIZATION OF THE OBSERVATION

The V.M. formation makes provision for setting in motion elements 1 and 3 as soon as the reinforcement column penetrates its formation. It is indispensable that this move be detected at its inception; this will permit to stop it and to get organized before the enemy is at firing distance.

The terrain surveillance by the reconnaissance plane must be duplicated by a continuous observation of the flanks of the column or columns, particularly by center and rear elements.

Should only one itinerary be used, and should covered ground parallel of close to the road obstruct the view, then it is necessary that the center and rear units commanders do not be satisfied with the search made by the head company; that's why they must detach small surveillance elements to the covered terrain.

CONDUCTION OF THE COMBAT

1. IN THE EVENT THE DISENGAGEMENT GROUPMENT ADVANCES ON TWO ROUTES

The two itineraries, one of which can be a mere trail, must be separated one from the other by a distance of 1,200 to 2,000 meters. The two columns must progress substantially on a level with each other. With such a formation, one of the columns will necessarily come to the

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flank of element E.3 or to that of Element 1.

The ambush will be discovered before any element has been able to penetrate the enemy formation and then the detachment commander will have the possibility of maneuvering advantageously against an adversary which has been surprised, which is no more under cover, and which will be forced to improvise.

2. IN THE EVENT THE GROUPMENT CAN USE ONLY ONE ITINERARY

It is very exceptional the case of a V.M. ambush being discovered by air or ground observation. So we cannot count on it.

The case that can be considered normal is the surprise. But for this the formation must be such as to allow the forces to escape the ambush and to outmaneuver it. For optimum conditions of maneuver and combat it is indispensable that:

1. the depth of the column, from the tip element to the rear guard (the latter excluded), be superior to the depth of the ambush, i.e., a depth of over 5 kilometers.
2. the rear guard (which because of this echelonment has the chance of being out of the gross of the column) be in a position to maneuver. It then must be adequately equipped and possess, if possible, sufficient armor. The head of the column and its command staff must be in the rear guard.

The echelonment in depth must not be obtained by the elongation of the elemental maneuver units (Combat Companies), but by increasing the distance between the latter in such a way that the units continue to be quickly maneuverable and because of that capable of either face the enemy on the spot, or counter-attack.

On the attached sketch an example is given on the groupment echelonment for a Battalion, an engineer Section, an armored platoon composed of 5 tanks and 4 H.T.

If the platoon consists only of 3 tanks and 2 H.T., the problem is more difficult, because one cannot easily divide it in two patrols. It's better then to position it at the rear guard.

The reactions of each element must be known and adjusted to those of the rest of the elements; coordination must be worked out in advance. The usual rapidity of the V.M. and the uncertainty of quick radio transmissions (without mentioning the lack of discretion) impose that the warding off be made known systematically to all and that it be changed as soon as the V.M. becomes aware of it.

A systematic warding off may be:

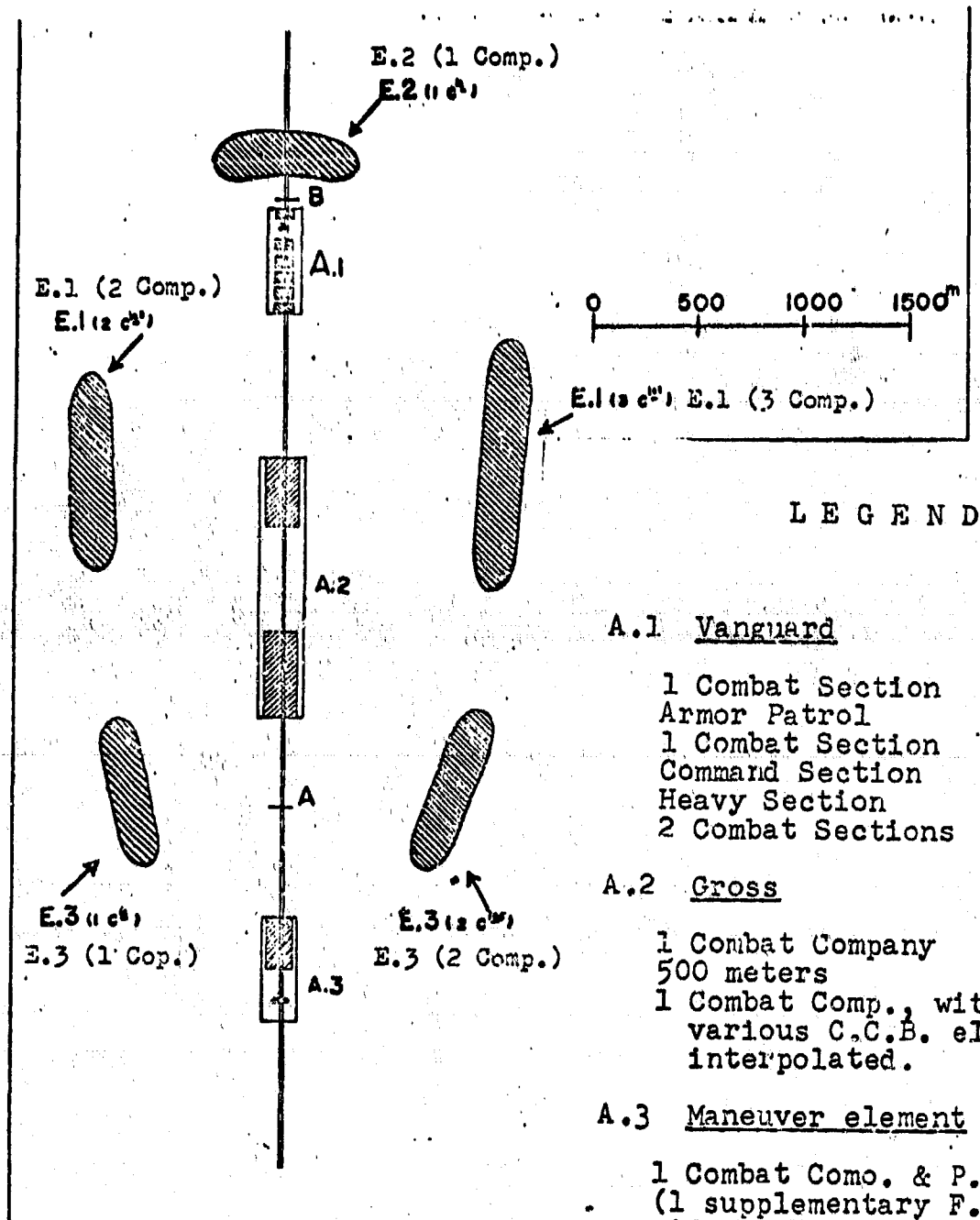
1. The vanguard encounters an ambushed enemy, well-hidden in the terrain so familiar to it.

A quick attack is only possible for the armor... maybe. The vanguard must then stop, get spiky, and face the enemy in all directions.

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EXAMPLE OF INITIAL FORMATION



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If the terrain is favorable, the vanguard fixes the E.2 element and the forward tips of the E.1.

2. The groos of the battalion is attacked on both sides and on the rear.

The Sections must alternatively break out from the road and face right and left, or get into the ditches or the slopes.

The last Section of the gross (necessarily a combat Section endowed with a machine gun group) faced toward the rear to fix the two E.3 elements, preventing them to join and intercepting the route between the gross and the rear guard.

3. The rear guard, with the Head of the Battalion and all its liaison resources (particularly a radio connection directly with the vanguard) counter-attacks immediately on one side of the road with the armored platoon, so to hit the back of element E.3 and the flank of element E.1. The distance in which it is situated (1,500 meters) must make him intervene at the moment the E.1 and E.3 elements get near the road.

The side on which the counter-attack must be launched, shall be selected in accordance with the terrain (feasibility of employment of tanks).

While in progression, each time the terrain varies, the attacking side can be changed. The Battalion Commander must keep the various element commanders of such selected changes.

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- b. Close protection : surveillance of the bridge above and below in a permanent manner, and by night having a lighting arrangement and a permanently set fire system of instantaneous release.

PASSIVE PROTECTION

It will comprise: A continuous peripheric protection by a series of obstacles,
Close protection obstacles.

a. Distant protection

The forbidden area will be enclosed within a circle of obstacles closed by night and only opened by day to permit road traffic on the bridge and eventual river traffic. This circle of obstacles will be placed at a distance of 100 to 150 meters from the bridge, so it can be effectively watched and battered.

It will be composed of: dirt, bed wire with A.P. mines and lighting traps,

On the waterway, laying up-stream and down-stream, on floats, necessarily for the protection of the bridge, a criss-cross net of barbed wire and ropes of about 1.5 meters high.

The attachments to the banks of the ground and water obstacles will have to be particularly good and strong. The removable portions of the road obstacles to permit the traffic, can consist of barriers or chevaux de frise. On the waterway, if so needed, they will consist of a sinkable wire net.

The interior of the protection area shall be cleared of brush and, if necessary, flattened.

The exterior and the camouflaged pathways which could serve as avenues of approach (hedges, borders of villages, isolated houses) shall also be cleared as much as possible.

b. Close protection :

To protect the abutments and the fixed supports :

- One must eliminate at maximum the recesses susceptible of being used to plant explosive charges.

- The hollow spaces up on the bay supports (particularly for the bays with concrete beams) will be filled up or obstructed with balls of barbed wire solidly attached.

The abutments at the points of contact with the water shall be densely dressed with barbed wire to a depth of 4 to 8 meters, protected with A.P. mines of the schumine type. This net of wires must raise up laterally up to the floor of the road.

- The fixed supports shall be encircled by a barbed wire cage, at the water level, taking into account the variations of the water flow.

- It is difficult to organize a close protection for the floating

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supports; security is to be provided by the reglamentary wire nets to be placed up and down stream on all floating bridges.

- It is also convenient to attach crossings to the front and rear tips of the floats so they can detonate the floating mines before they reach the bridge.

SURVEILLANCE

The bridge must subject to close surveillance.

By day, the surveillance will be mainly exercised on the traffic:

- traffic controls shall be established on important bridges susceptible to be in danger.
- in case a vehicle gets stalled on the bridge, one must:
- order the driver to remain close to its vehicle,
- check immediately the load of the vehicle,
- take immediate measure of disengagement.

Fluvial traffic shall likewise surveilled. The stoppage of boats under the bridge or any mooring to the pillars shall be forbidden.

The floating bodies caught in the nets or in the cages protecting the pillars must be carefully cleaned and examined and eventually brought to the banks.

By night, the forbidden area must be alertly watched. One will establish:

- a sentry at each end of the bridge (fixed),
- mobile sentries on the deck of the bridge, equipped with portable lighting equipment, with the mission to watch the abutments and the pillars or floats.
- watchers on the banks at the level of the nets, with the mission to watch the banks and the waterway.
- the watching of the bridge will be made easier by installing a permanent lighting system to provide close protection to the supports by means of orientable beacons.
- The surveillance detachment shall be equipped with flare rockets to watch the forbidden span of water; it must keep in continuous touch with the formation of close security by telephone, runners, rockets.

CLOSE DEFENSE FORMATION

The bridge must be included in the post defense formation. The fire plan must particularly include the defense of the under bridge, pillars, abutments, span of water and forbidden area including the banks. The number 1 order must be always to maintain the bridge intact.

By night, the defense formation must assure the defense of the forbidden area. This must include:

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A. A disposition of automatic arms fire of immediate release and permanently in position:

- on the forbidden water span, up and down stream,
- on the road access,
- on the supports of the bridge.

B. A fire disposition prepared on the obstacles around the forbidden area and beyond the obstacles. According to the circumstances, this disposition shall include automatic weapon fire, mortar, and artillery fire.

At the alarm signal, the protection fire shall be started by the artillery, and the garrison shall take the combat position.

C. Special means of intervention including one or more noncoms having received elemental instruction as pyrotechnists for the eventual unpriming of the explosive charges.

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ROLE OF THE "WARNING BELLS" AND OF THE COUNTER- ATTACK ELEMENTS WITHIN A POST OR SUPPORT POINT

Note by the General Commander in Chief,
dated Sept. 1953

Role and composition of the "warning bells" ("sonnettes")

They are meant to assure the security outside the post in the form of observation posts by night (and eventually by day, although the patrol system is usually preferable by day).

Their composition consists of: 2 or 3 men per point of observation, equipped with alarm systems (536, telephone, signals) and light weapons.

Their mission: Watch the routes of approach to the post (without forgetting the waterways).

Their emplacement : To be varied as frequently as possible (different by night, to be shifted when discovered). Night emplacements must be reached by a secret indirect route.

When the enemy arrives, if the "warning bells" cannot fall back without being discovered, the Head of the Post may:

- order the intervention of the artillery, or
- check the information by a patrol.

NOTE - The artillery fire can be followed by a patrol.

If the "warning bells" are surprised and cannot fall back because of this, without being observed, or without hindering the post defense:

- it will endeavor to camouflage itself and take cover (place selected in advance), will inform the post, and if the enemy is small in numbers will intervene against it (in liaison with the post);
- it must not prevent the head of the post from releasing the artillery fire (since it will be in shelter) or the other post fire;
- it must consider a normal practice to await for dawn to return to the post, thus preventing a rupture even brief of the obstacles surrounding the post.

THE COUNTER-ATTACK ELEMENT

It consists of a detachment permanently ready to intervene, both by day or by night, to assure the internal security of the post (eventually the external security also).

Strength: Minimum 1/6 of the Garrison.

Armament : Minimum 1/3 of the P.M. personnel. Offensive and defensive grenades.

Emplacement: Grouped in a shelter, the personnel must be able to counter-attack inside the post.

Intervention: This detachment has a permanent sentry in alert. The men are attired and equipped (particularly by night) and must quickly counter-attack under conditions rehearsed in advance, frequently, in accordance with the various hypothesis of enemy attack under any weather conditions (day, night, rain, smoke, etc.).

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V.M. ATTACK TACTICS AGAINST THE MILITIA IN WON OVER VILLAGES

Abstract from a V.M. Notice appeared in 1951

.....
..... The enemy uses the tactics of continuous nibbling: it attacks, occupies, pacifies through terror, creates reactionary islands. The most dangerous form is the Communal Militia, which permits the adversary to recover its strength and concentrated it.

The Militia builds blockhaus, and if it is catholic it uses the Church as central redoubt. The post strength comprises two groups and one section, distributed in cells of 5 or 6 men who, by night, in civilian clothes, take their position in the blockhaus or in a village house, changing position every night.

The weak points of this organization are:

- friction between the Frenchmen and the Militia
- " " the Militia and the population
- " " the Militiamen themselves
- a certain number of the inhabitants faithful to the resistance
- low morale of the Militiamen who are poor soldiers.

But the great number of posts, the abundance of armament, the increasing solidity of the blockhaus constitute our problems. Nevertheless we can overcome the enemy by surprise attacks, without previous Dich Van action.

ANNIHILATION BY SURPRISE WITH PREVIOUS DICH VAN ACTION

To begin with one must spread fear by executing well-known reactionaries, and by destroying the rebel administration to inspire confidence to the hesitant population. However, one must not force through terror the population to collaborate with us, because then we would not be able to carry out our final objective: the edification of the masses. We must win the confidence of the population.

The communal troops will collect intelligence, will carry out the armed propaganda, and the Regionals will organize the attack. Action must be executed swiftly, to prevent escapings, etc. Destruction of the posts must be followed by the restoration of the bases.

Attacks will be launched by night preferably where the secret

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correspondent is located. The role of the secret correspondent is to exterminate the Chiefs and the other reactionaries and to open the doors. If the correspondent is a chief, the matter will be much easier since he will be able to distribute the men at the points of less hindrance to us. While the combat is going on one must make propaganda among the inhabitants.

ANNIHILATION BY SURPRISE WITHOUT PREVIOUS DICH VAN ACTION

Rapidity, secrecy, massive action, aim to disperse the enemy and to become masters of the strong points at minimum cost. Action must be prepared on accurate intelligence. The groups can be divided in cells, lightly equipped for swift displacement, for easier passing over the walls and operate on the roofs, a position which puts us at the cover of grenades and enemy fire.

One must not forget the possibility of intercepting the reinforcements. It might be convenient to summons the militiamen to surrender, but one must never use the civil population as a shield.

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PART II

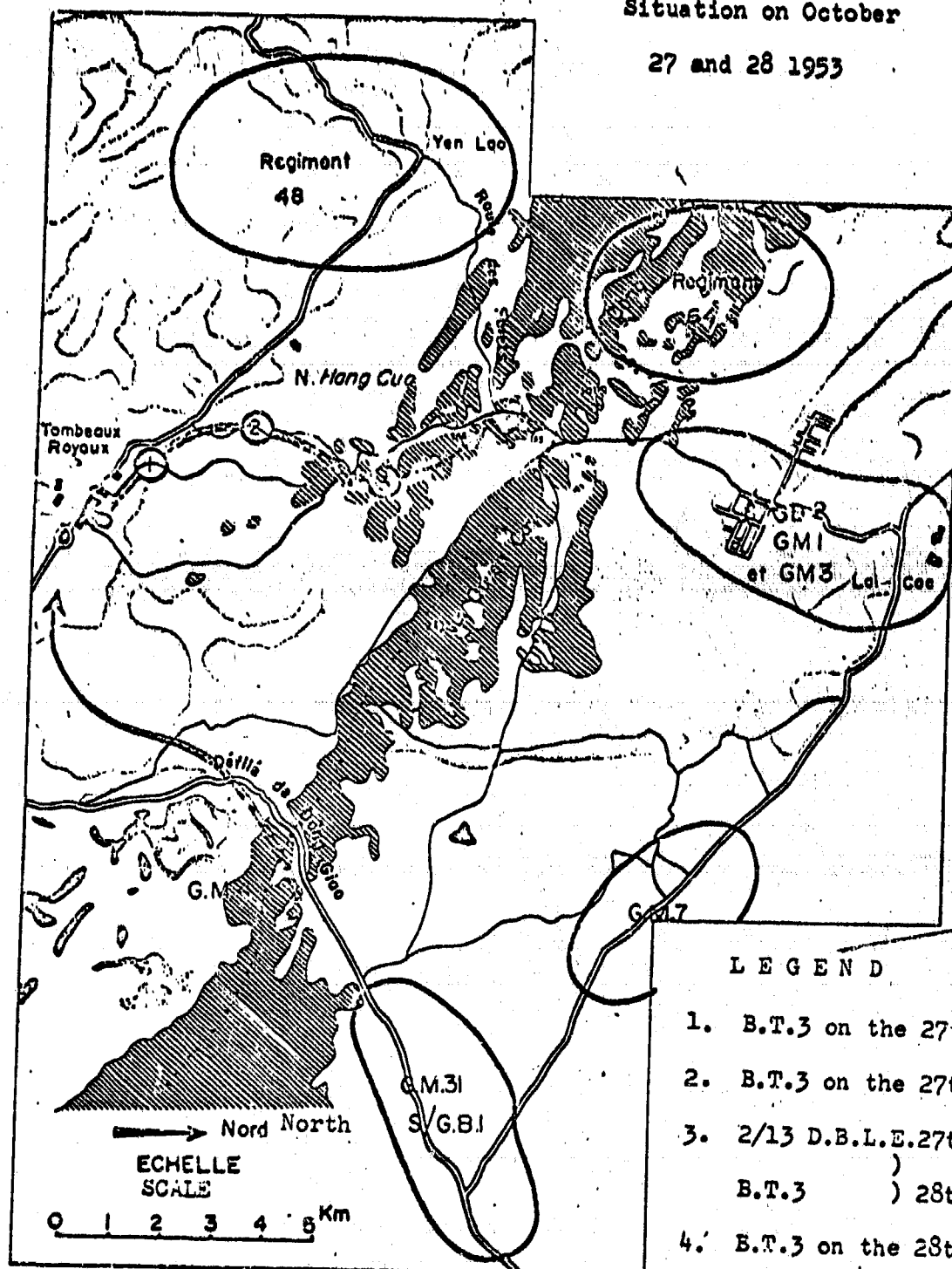
SPECIFIC CASES

Several of the following cases refer to combats which were unfavorable to our Army. It is on purpose that their description here was selected, since there is no better lesson than that drawn from failure.

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Situation on October
27 and 28 1953



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ATTACK OF A FRIENDLY COLUMN IN THE MIDDLE REGION

Forest Road combat on October 28 and 29, 1953

Within the frame of Operation "MOUETTE", G.M. 4 launched a raid starting October 25, to locate and engage Regiment 48 of Division 320, which had been observed south and southwest of YEN LAO.

For this mission, the G.M. 4 was composed of the 11/13th Half-Brigade of the Legion, of Indochinese March Battalion, of the 11/1st Regiment of Parachutists and of the 3rd THAI Battalion.

SITUATION ON OCTOBER 28th

Departed from the DONG GIAO gorge, the G.M. 4 reached the Royal Tombs on October 26, without incidents. It did establish contact and the V.M. observers withdrew.

On October 27, the G.M. 4 received the mission to pursue its raid through a trail going from the Royal Tombs and to the east of NUI HANG CUA to end at the Forest Road south of the mountain pass at the border of ANNAM.

The 3rd THAI Battalion constituted the vanguard till the gorge north of hill 52, where it arrived at 10:30. There it was outpassed by three other battalions, of which it becomes the rear guard.

So it resumed its march at 17:30 behind the 11/13th D.B.L.E. At 22:30 the latter made halt for the night installing itself as tip close support around the trail. The 3rd B.T. halted also and took the same dispositions. The contact with the rest of the column was lost.

On October 28, the 3rd B.T. resumed its march at 09:00, behind the 11/13th D.B.L.E. which at dawn had sent reconnaissance parties to guide the column.

At 11:30 the head Company finally reaches the Forest Road.

The apparent slowness of the progression was due to the nature of the terrain: typical jungle of the Middle Region with calcareous rocks covered with thick vegetation, small streams with steep banks, a trail winding among the trees and tall rocks and frequently obstructed by fallen trunks.

Upon reaching the Forest Road one entered a wide basin covered with tall grass. All the elevations were covered with wood.

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FORMATION AT THE MOMENT
OF THE AMBUSH

Forest Road

- LEGEND
- B.T.3 friendly movement
 - V.M. movement
 - V.M machine gun
 - V.M. automatic weapon
 - V.M. mortar



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ENEMY REACTIONS

The days of October 25 and 26 were spent in a futile search of the enemy contact.

The V.M. units supposed to be in the YEN LAO region could have expected:

- either an engagement on the YEN LAO road, or
- a fall back of our troops towards the friendly positions at LAI CAC.

The extreme slowness of the march during October 27 enabled the enemy to read our intentions and to set up an ambush formation corresponding to the second hypothesis.

It is very probable that the B.T.3 march was closely followed by the V.M.

Under such conditions and on such a terrain, the rear guard battalion of a column is certainly an enticing prey. The preceding battalion has just passed impudently a few moments before, without the battalion that follows being able to experiment the least sensation of security.

The area relatively open where the 3rd B.T. entered upon arriving at the Forest Road is far from inspiring relief, in spite of the fact that this should be normal on approaching the friendly lines, but the tall grass of the basin and the neighboring woods were a perfect hideout for the enemy.

THE AMBUSH

The ambush opened at 12:30 under the following circumstances:

- 1 - Mortar fire against the road and its surroundings.
- 2 - Simultaneous action of the automatic weapons:
 - at the crossing of the trail and the Forest Road
 - on the road bed, forced passage point, where the forest comes very close to the road
 - at the mountain pass of the Annam border, which closes the exit toward the north.
- 3 - Since the starting of fire, attacks with hand grenades and bayonet by infantry men camouflaged in the tall grass, at less than 20 meters from the road and on each side, or in the forest bordering road crossing
- 4.- Other weapons (light machine guns and 12,7) appeared later at the top of some elevated rocks dominating the basin (fire against the mountain pass and against a Morane which was brought down on the 28th at " PM.)

B.T.3 reactions

The head company (9th Company) climbed to the mountain pass at

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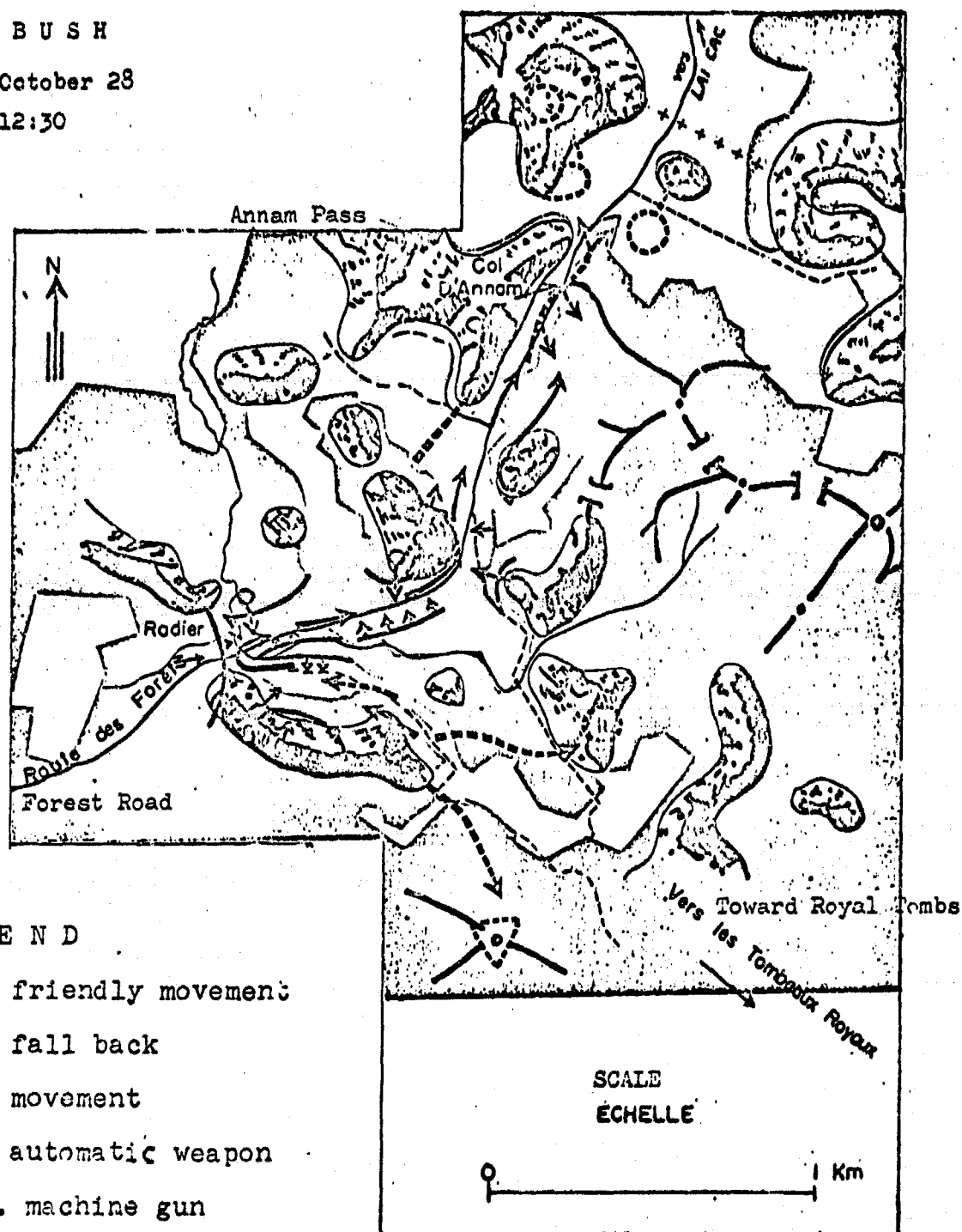
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AMBUSH

of October 28

at 12:30

Toward LAI CAC



LEGEND

- BT 3 friendly movement
- BT 3 fall back
- ↘ V.M. movement
- V.M. automatic weapon
- ≡→ V. M. machine gun
- ☑→ V.M. mortar

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the start of the ambush. The V.M. rushed out from cover. They were repulsed and the rear Company succeeded in setting foot on the Pass; its heavy arms (57 gun) take care of the V.M. automatic weapons discovered (machine guns sweeping the Pass) and the approaches to the road were immediately patrolled.

The Command Posts followed the 9th Company.

The 11th reached the pass after 13:00 carrying some wounded.

The 12th and the C.C.B. engaged the enemy hand to hand but the latter succeeded in fragmenting it in small elements left to themselves. The C.C.B. succeeded in saving, in spite of losses, its radio equipment and most of the armament (except the ammunition abandoned by the P.I.M. in fleeing), but the 12th suffered severe losses in men and materiel.

In small groups, the men broke the encirclement after a sometimes savage defense, then take refuge in the bush.

At 12:30, the 10th Company was still on the trail. The first intention of the unit Commander was to push toward the north, but he immediately encounters rear elements of the 12th company having suffered the head on attacks of the V.M. head plug, positioned at the crossing and ebbing.

The unit Commander regroups its forces and filling that the pass was locked, inform by radio the Battalion commander about the situation, and the latter ordered him to try to rally.

The attempt failed after a hot engagement and the unit found itself divided in two elements, which under the order of the unit commander fell back with their wounded to the nearest tall rocks; one to the east, the other to the west of the trail.

The radio connection with the P.C. of the B.T. could be maintained, so the commander of the 10th company could learn that he was with the 1st element, but without contact with element No. 2 dispossessed of post. He learned that a disengagement operation was going to be undertaken in the afternoon.

DISENGAGEMENT OPERATIONS

Two operation were going to be necessary for the disengagement and the collection of the 3dr B.T. elements which were encircled.

Operation of October 28

The 11/13th D.B.L.E. having arrived about noon without difficulty to the friendly positions on hill 120, learned about the situation around 12:45 through the listening post of the G.M.4. Without awaiting orders from its Commander, it dispatched two reinforcement companies and then, almost the entire 11/13th rejoins the B.T. 3 which is holding the Annam Pass.

The Colonel in command of the G.M. 3, just arrived from IAI CAC, organized on the spot the operation counting with the support of a tank platoon of the R.I.C.M.

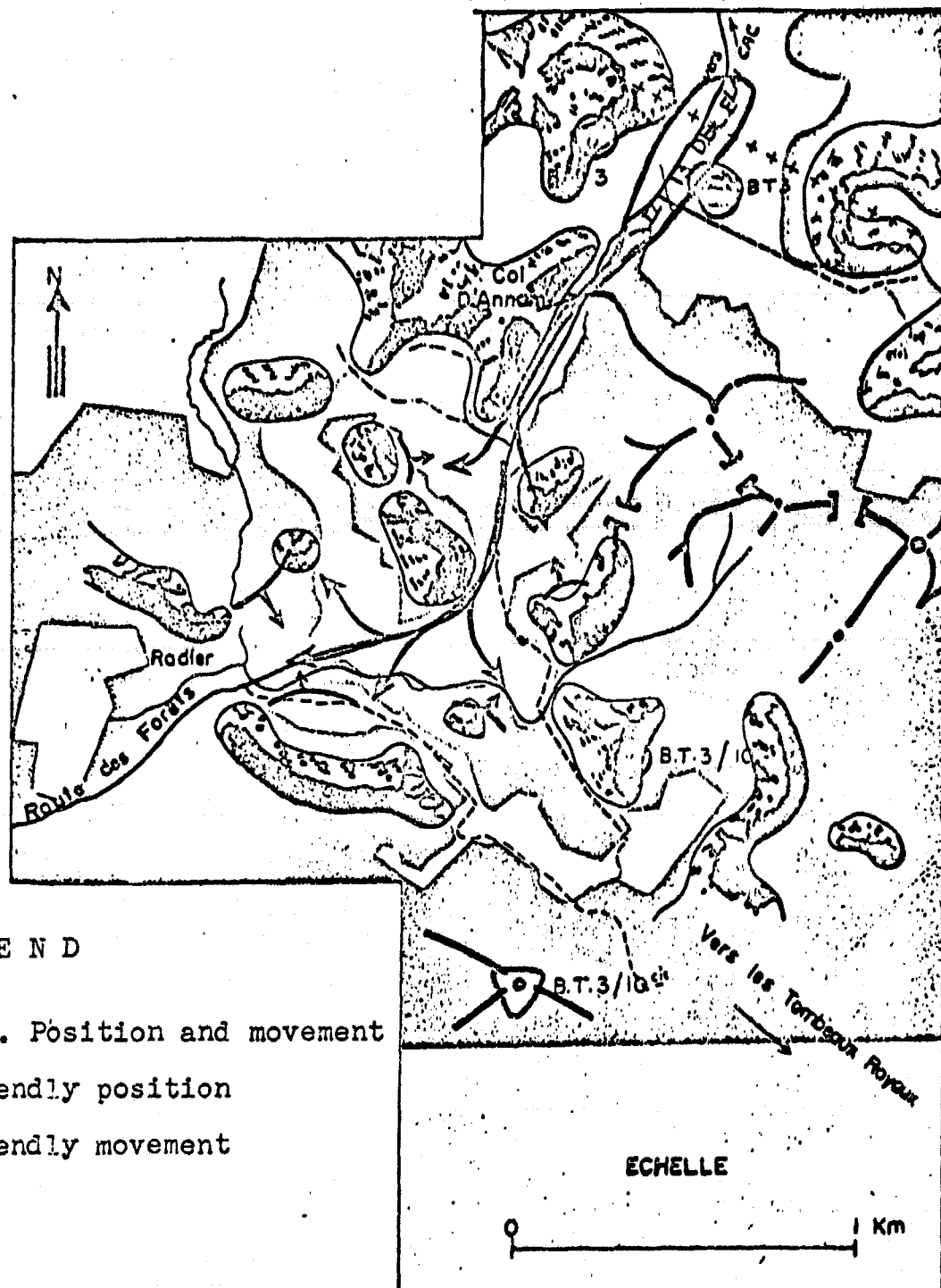
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DISENGAGEMENT ACTION

OF OCTOBER 28, 1953

Afternoon



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Starting at 14:30, the operation was conducted frontally on both sides of the road. Upon reaching the Pass, the 11/13th met with a hot resistance, but the cross-roads is nevertheless reached at 16:00.

At 16:30, the V.M. launched without success a counter-attack from the covers encircling the cross-roads which could not be crossed.

The action, however, made possible the recuperation of part of the materiel and of a few wounded from the B.T.3.

At 18:00, with the support of a company of the 11/13th arrived from LAI-CAC, started the disengagement which was made difficult by the pressure exercised by the V.M. The tanks had to fire point blank to support the infantry.

For the night encampment, all the elements that participated in the operation, were retreated to positions of hill 120 (held by the 73rd B.V.N. of G.M. 3) and in the LAI CAC basin.

Night of the 28 to the 29

During the night, the position held by one of the encircled elements of the B.T.3 (southern element) was probed by the V.M. (around 19:30).

At dawn, the enemy tried to take the position, which has been summarily rebuilt during the night. Protected by the tall rocks, the defenders succeeded in repelling the attack with submachine gun and hand grenade fire. The V.M., having already suffered heavy losses early in the night, did not renew the attack.

Operation of October 29

Another disengagement operation was prepared on the 29th with reinforced resources:

- The 11/13th D.B.L.E. supported by tanks would attack frontally on the axis of the Forest Road.
- The 11/1 R.C.P. and 2 companies of the 3rd Battalion would execute an outflanking maneuver from the southeast with the aim of aiding the encircled elements.

During the night, the V.M. (later we learned that it consisted of the 706 Battalion of Regiment 64) firmly positioned itself on the Annam Pass and at the foot of the calcareous rocks bordering the road north of the pass.

Nevertheless, the 11/13th succeeded in forcing the passage and took the Pass by storm. As in the previous evening, the engagements were very violent and our elements could not cross the cross-roads.

During this action, the 11/1 R.C.P. and the 2 companies of the B.T.3 opened a trail (with machetes) in the crests of jungle vegetation, toward the southeast and then toward the south. Radio contact was established with the 10th Company of the B.T.3, which encirclement apparently was broken by the V.M. about noon.

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Under the protection of artillery fire, the two B.T.3 elements which had also opened a jungle trail, succeeded to join, at 16:00 and 17:30, carrying all their wounded.

The disengagement at dusk was as delicate as the previous evening because of the V.M. pressure, which faithful to its tactics launched an attack hand to hand.

At 21:00, all the elements had regained their positions on hill 120 and in the LAI CACA Basin.

Balance of the 28 and 29 October operations

- V.M. Losses : 161 counted dead
14 prisoners
- Friendly losses :
 - 11/13th D.B.L.E. : 6 dead, 36 wounded
 - 11/1 R.C.P. : 2 dead, 9 wounded
 - Erd B.T. : 12 dead, 52 wounded, 85 disappeared.

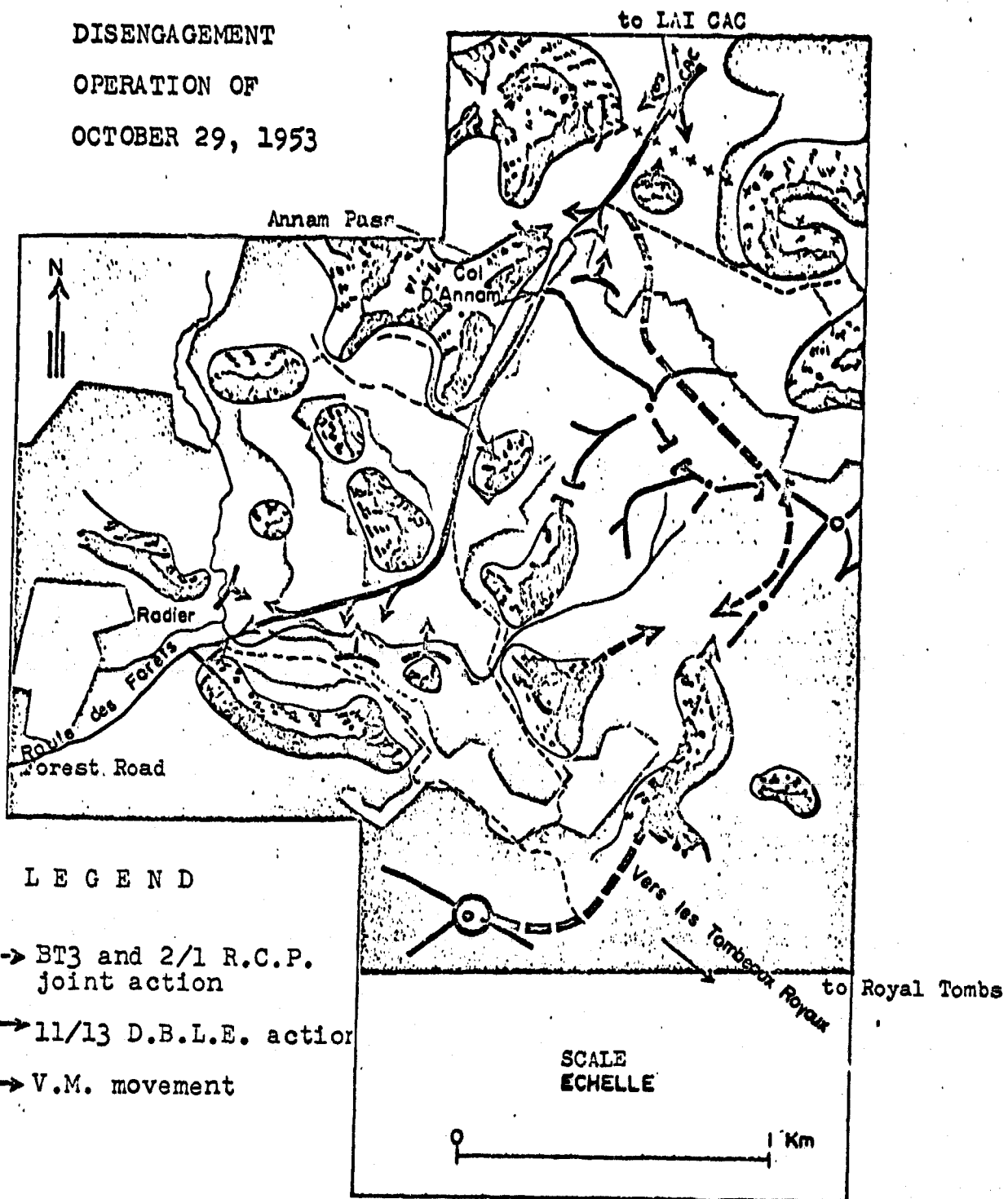
To be noted, however, that:

- 29 riflemen and 1 European succeeded (often after short capture) to rejoin our lines on the following days. Someones with their armament.
- the 28 October action permitted us, in spite of the difficulty of searching in the tall grass, to recuperate part of the armament left on the field by the dead and wounded of the 3.B.T.

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DISENGAGEMENT
OPERATION OF
OCTOBER 29, 1953



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ABSTRACTS FROM A REPORT BY THE COMMANDER OF THE 10th COMPANY

.....

Fortunately, the surprise was not complete. The experience made our men distrustful. At the first volleys, everybody went into position. Our reaction was quick. One fires more or less blindly in this jungle where one cannot detect a hidden man at a distance of 2 meters.

I regrouped my men quickly; they were too much spreaded over the trail, but I massed them. Thanks God we were able to get out from the gorges and if the situation was not ideal, at least the dominant fire was distant enough to make more noise than harm.

Soon, as we expected, mortar fire started, but the fire was badly adjusted and fell short. Everyone took cover the best he could, waiting for the forthcoming attack.

After a short silence, explosions of "Xu phong" burst on my left which is enduring the first shock. Then the enemy emerged from all sides. In a few seconds, the situation became more than critical. The rear elements of Company ahead of us, ebbed toward us. We could fire without hitting them. What to do?

A fall back to the more defendable positions is necessary. The heights we had crossed not long ago would be ideal fortresses. Besides, we had no choice, we were greatly outnumbered. We took advantage of a moment of indecision of the V.M. to disengage ourselves. Happily the trail behind us was free. A magnificent calcareous rock rised at about 400 meters. Ere the V.M. could resume its rush we were in our new position.

Nature worked in our favor. The height we occupied was a craggy mass of rocks and each man took immediately his position. Should the V.M. come for us there, they would have to pay dear. They understood this and we heard them discussing at the foot of the rocks, but no attack.

We breathed with relief. It was 14:00. With certain apprehension I ordered the radio antenna to be installed. We got the connection right away. It was music to our ears to hear the voice of the Battalion head. We were still surrounded by V.M. forces but we did not feel alone any more. Happy faces. We were sure that we would not be forgotten there.

Our friends at the Forest Road had not remained idle. In the direction of the Pass the battle raged. In the moments of silence, we could hear the roar of the tanks advance. Radio kept us informed. A Legion Battalion was counter-attacking supported by a platoon of tanks!

Air fighters arrived guided by a Morane. Bombs and napalm showered around us. It must be rough on the trail. But the V.M. still responded. The sector must have occupied by the V.M. forces since many days, since immediately their anti-aircraft guns were put into action. Tracing bullets were wrapping up our fighters, which nevertheless proceed with their destructive work.

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Minutes and then hours passed. Things at the Pass must not have been going well. Fire continued to be intense but we could sense that the combat was not getting nearer to us. The V.M. brought reinforcements to the Pass and in spite of the exploits of the Legionaries, there was no breakthrough.

Our own encirclement was more and more defined. The patrols sent to probe the approaches to our hill got immediately engaged. The V.M. tried the demoralization tactics. "Give up, surrender your arms, and we guarantee you your life and freedom," they shouted. Some seemed to have good command of the French language. Then they started to menace us using pure military slang, to come over and cut out our balls if we did not listen.

By the radio we were informed that our counter-attack permitted to rescue the company that preceded ours. Some small groups return, having preferred to disperse in the bush rather than to make an impossible stand.

Then came the distressed voice of the Battalion head who told us not to expect relief any more, at least that evening. Night was coming and the order to withdraw was given to the counter-attack elements. We understood very well that the Command could not risk to lose important forces in this cut-throat locality to disengage one company. The prospect to spend one night in such position was certainly not mirthful.

But we should not get discouraged. We had to hold our ground. The heads of section and all the noncoms refilled the riflemen ranks. The last moments of day-light were used to improve our combat emplacements. The summit of our hill became a series of rocky blockhaus. It would take plenty to remove us from there.

Night. Each one at his post listened to the slightest noise. The V.M. could be heard moving about at the foot of the hill. We heard loose rocks rolling down and noise of branches getting near. Whispering orders were given. We were ready. We did not have to wait long. About 10 grenades thrown from too far away burst near our loopholes, and then volleys of submachine guns followed.

We immediately felt that this attack lacked vigor. The enemy did not get near. As a result of our intensive respond, the adversary took security distance. Five minutes after, the action is over. The V.M. had simply probed us. It was clear that we were not willing to surrender our arms.

Calm was restored. Our men were exhausted but everybody was awake, finger on the trigger.

A sound of engines in the sky. It was the familiar purring of the D.C. 3 by night. I tried the radio. Nothing. But we were to learn later that the plane was also calling us but the batteries of our 300 were too weak. At each passage, the intent was to no avail.

Hours go by, slowly, very slowly... About 06:00, some cracking was heard. This stirred the general somnolence. Everybody became alert, lest with the coming of day another attempt were made. Hope grew.

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The V.M. forces are really good in approach march. We thought they were still half-way down the slope when, suddenly, there were bursts of volleys at less than 20 meters from us.

This time they meant business. We were assailed on three sides. Tracing bullets coming up were forming a dome over our heads. During a period of five minutes, we were not certain whose grenades were exploding, ours or the enemy's. The top of the hill was a true circle of fire. But we held all over. Because we were so closely grouped, not a single inch of terrain was without being fired.

Each minute was vital. Everybody knew that it was not the moment to spare cartridges. The V.M. shouted infernally, but its yelling revealed impotence. They had not gained an inch of ground since the beginning of the attack. The volleys became more scarce. Once more we had them checked. The branches way down the hill cracked under the feet of the assailants abandoning the fight.

When the calm was restored, we made a balance of the action. It was 07:00. Far away, a familiar purring moved us to listen. No doubt about it; it was the Cricket.

- Hello Cricket... Here blue COCA calling you.
Do you receive us? Go ahead.

- Here Cricket. I receive you 5 on 5 ...

The contact is restored. The LAI CAC P.C. was informed of our situation fifteen minutes later, and we were told that a fresh relief column was already on its way.

Each one remained at his post but this time hope was genuine, in spite of hunger, fatigue and lack of sleep.

The Legion Battalion and the tanks that the evening before had tried to disengage us, resumed their advance toward the Pass. But this was only a diversion. The V.M. was too solidly entrenched in the Sector. A Parachute Battalion was coming to our help, supported by our own Battalion, which in spite of the frightful engagement of the previous evening would not remain inactive when it is question of saving one of its companies.

Since the direct route was impassable, they were going to open a trail of their own through the crests, up to the immediate approaches of our position.

The artillery was not going to be idle either. Under the direction of the Morane above, were shelled all around our position. We almost felt definitively secure.

Aviation was likewise active. Under its powerful support, the Legionaries and the tanks soon took the Pass again. Judging by the reports of the heavy weapons, we guessed that the V.M. had there the major resources.

On the side of the relief column proper, everything was quiet. Through the radio we followed its progression. Familiar voices told us: the head of the Battalion is here, sure of success.

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All was not progressing as quickly as we wished, but the hours went by lightened by the arrival of 105 guns and the constant and heavy submachine gun fire on the side of the Legionaries.

About 15:00, our plan for escape was finally completed. If all went well, the assembly would take place at 16:00. We would have by then near us a concentration of all the 105 and 155 of the sector. We would have to take the second volley as a cue to disengage and make a run through the 800 meters separating us from our friends.

Unlike the other, this last hour was extremely short. The decisive minute was at hand. We were to cross that distance at all costs and without hesitation. Everybody undertood that and decision was reflected in all faces.

A short delay of progression gave us 20 minutes leeway. Then, suddenly, it is hell all around.

We were to wait until the shells fell near, but not so near as they did. Fortunately the hill was wooded. Shells burst all about and above us, cutting the big branches over our heads, but without harm. Bravo for the Artillery! That was exactly what was needed. By radio I reported the fire as correct, although I was tempted to request it should be 50 meters shorter, since a quarter of an hour later we would have to leave our shelters and advance in the middle of the shelling. But this was the only way to clear our vicinity of enemy.

We had no time to think things twice. The second volley came as brutal as the first one.

The rush was not much delayed by the carrying of our wounded. All had been perfectly calculated. Our first elements left their covers with the last burst of artillery shells.

The impact we had feared did not take place. There was not a single V.M. at the bottom of the hill, thoroughly battered by our guns.




The bush swallowed was. Another 800 meters to cross and the nightmare would be over. No problem as to the direction to follow: our friends maintained on a crest a submachine gun fire who guided and reassured us. Above, the Morane marks our route with smoke grenades. Only 500 meters to run, then only 300. We were sure of success.

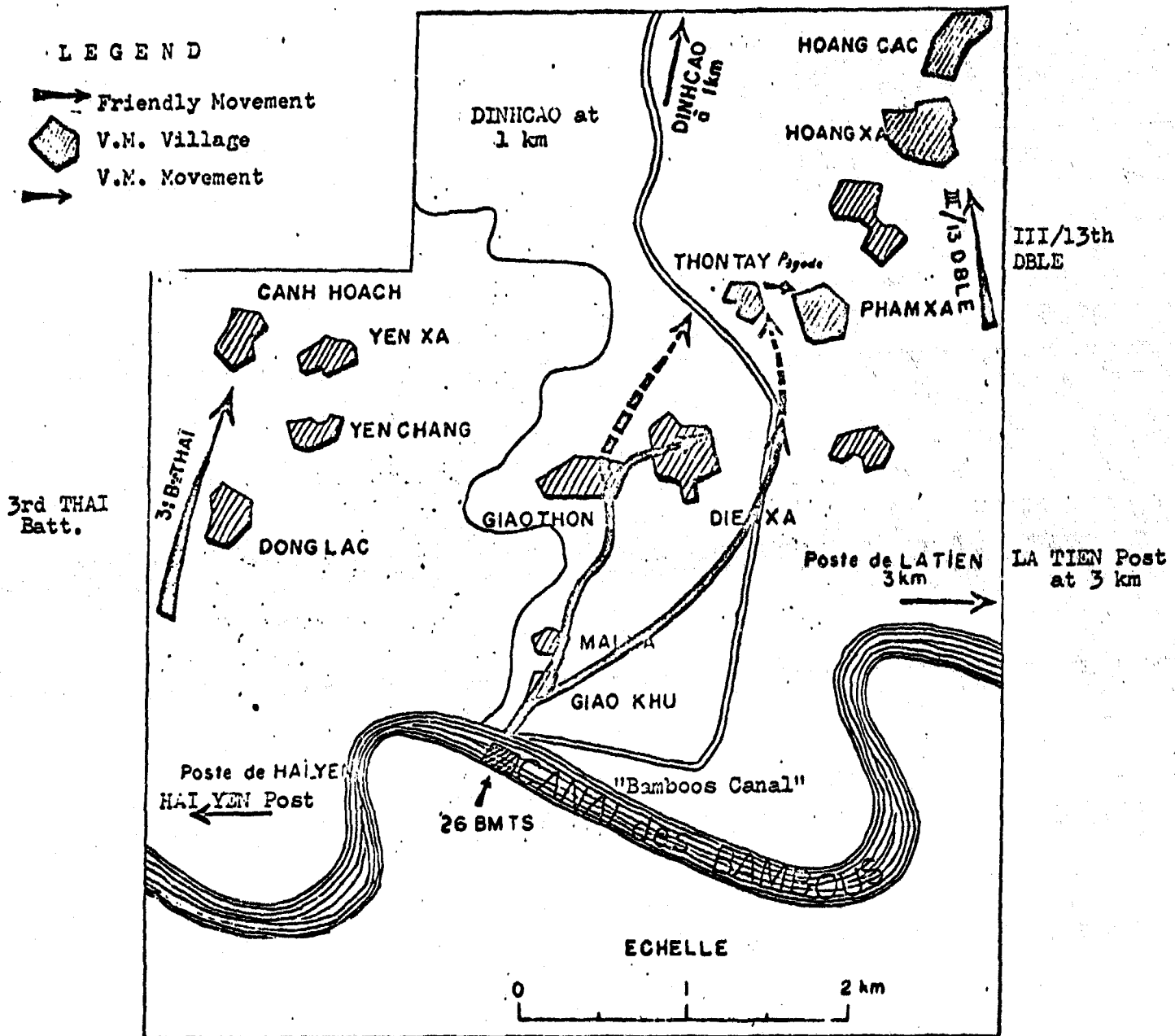
The crest line was there before us, welcoming us. By echelons, all the Company reached it, exhausted but smiling. Another climb over abrupt rocks and then friendly voices to guide us. The camouflaged parachutes were still hanging among the trees. It was 17:30 and our adventure ended.

THE PHAM XA

COMBAT

LEGEND

-  Friendly Movement
-  V.M. Village
-  V.M. Movement



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UNFRUITFUL ATTACK TO A V.M. FORTIFIED VILLAGE

PHAM XA COMBAT

On September 23, 1953, operation "BROCHET" was launched with the aim of destroying the HUNG YEN regiment 42 bases, installed by the HUNG YEN, and of annihilating this unit if possible.

Within the frame of this operation, to assure the blocking at the southern side of the area to clean up, G.M. 7 received the mission to open the north dam of the Bamboos Canal and of quickly occupy (in principle about noon) two villages located 10 kms approximately to the north of the canal.

Given the mission and the assigned front, the Commander of the G.M. 7, departed from HUNG YEN with the 3rd THAI Battalion, divided the tasks as follows:

- The 3rd THIA Battalion shall open the north dam of the Canal up to HAI YEN, then shall execute an overall search of the villages DONG IAC, CANH HOACH, YEN CHANG and YEN XA.
- The group of A.O.F. colonial artillery shall take emplacement as quick as possible at the HAI YEN post.
- The III/13th Half-Brigade of Legion beached at the LA TIEN post, shall search HOANG XA and HOANG CAC. NOTE: These two units were embarked at Hanoi the evening before. (1)
- The 26th Battalion of Marching Senegalese Riflemen, beached at the LA TIEN Post at 07:30 with destination to GIAO KHU, shall proceed very rapidly to DINH CAO, without searching the villages. (1)

The action of the latter battalion shall be studied down below.

Considering the mission and the emphasis put on the speed factor, the Commander of the 26th B.M.T.S. articulated his battalion in two columns and gave to the commanders the order of going through the villages without much search.

The column on the left side composed of the 1st and 2nd companies, followed the left bank of a stream going through GIAO KHU, MAI XA, GIAO THON, DIEM XA, THUONG THON and VAN XA.

The right side column, composed in the following order of the 205th Native Company (put at the head because of being light and swift), the 3rd Company, the P.C. of the Battalion, the C.C.B. and the 4th Company, departed from GIAO KHU and took the trail through MAI XA toward the northeast and then the road toward the north.

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The Commander of the 205th Company of Natives received the order to neglect the village of THON PHAM, but to search thoroughly the village of THON TAY (located very near the road) while occupying it, and while the rest of the right side column continues to advance toward the final objective.

The left side groupement progressed quickly toward GIAO THON, then toward THUONG THON and found the villages abandoned. However, the Commander of the 1st Company indicated there were suspicious movements on the other bank of the stream to YEN TAO. This information was confirmed toward 10:30 by the 3rd THAI Battalion.

The 205th Company of Natives advanced rapidly toward THON TAY and easily set foot on the village which was searched from west to east.

All of a sudden and from very near, the fire bursted out and the North Section was counter-attacked by a V.M. section. Our forces reacted immediately and the Commander of the Company attacked at the head of his reserve section. The V.M. gave ground and withdraw through the paddy fields (the rice was very high), toward the pagoda located northwest of PHAM XA, leaving several dead behind.

The Commander of the Battalion, assuming that this V.M. section was not isolated, decided not to engage his unit marching in column by the road, before making sure his suspicion was confirmed by the presence of V.M. elements in PHAM XA.

On the other hand, he endeavored to push the opposing fractions toward the north to maintain them within the blocking scheduled for late afternoon.

Consequently:

He stopped the left side column ordering it to establish itself facing north and northwest, while keeping a reserve Company at THUONG THON.

Once the search of THON TAY was completed, by the Native Company, he pushed the 3rd Company into this village.

The P.C. and the C.C.B. marched on the road as far as THUONG THON, while the latter company covers the route of evacuation of the first dead and wounded, directing them to the north dam of the Bamboos Canal.

The artillery not being yet in position, a fire base was constituted with the automatic weapons of the 205th Native Company, the heavy sections of the 2nd and 3rd Companies, as well as the 81 mortars. (1) Note - This fire base later wiped out some mortar fire.

One made a first attempt to penetrate into PHAM XA through the west edge of the village.

In spite of the fire base, the 3rd Company could not cross the paddy fields between the two villages, these being battered by violent fire. It then tried to outflank and penetrate the south side, but it was stopped by a wide and deep ditch of water, under enemy fire. It fell back under the protection of the fire base.

ORIGINAL 100 000

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The 2nd Company, brought in in the meanwhile to the north of THON THAY, tried to set foot into PHAM XA through the northwest corner. It reached the cemetery, but could not go further, because it was taken under the automatic weapon fire installed on the west edge, incompletely neutralized by the fire base; it was also harassed by the north side fire and particularly by that coming from the pagoda located northwest of the village. Dead and wounded were evacuated.

One requested intervention of the fighters as soon as the first attempt against PHAM XA showed that the village was strongly defended. The fighters arrived finally by 14:30 and bombed the western edge of the pagoda, which was entirely demolished and collapsed over the V.M. which occupied it.

The 2nd Company succeeded then in occupying the terreplein of the pagoda, but it cannot emerge from it. So, it installs itself facing the north and northwest edged of PHAM XA where the violent fire comes from.

The 3rd Company succeeded simultaneously to set foot on the southwest corner of PHAM XA, but cannot flow into this small bridge head, except in small groups.

In the meanwhile, the 3rd THAI Battalion had reached YEN CHANG and by this it allowed the Commander of the 26th to maintain only one surveillance element facing west; he thus recovers 3 sections of the 1st Company and pushes them to the northwest of PHAM XA.

The search of PHAM XA then started by the 1st and 3rd companies, but it was already 16:30. This village is particularly fractioned and half its surface consists of deep ponds. The foot bridges and pathways are all battered by enemy fire and progression is difficult since the very beginning.

When the head elements left the area just bombed, they encountered an organized defense against local counter-attacks, with small strength but very violent. Each inch of terrain is to be paid with heavy losses. The proximity of the adversary did not permit to have artillery intervention (although it was available and emplaced) neither the intervention of the aircraft.

At 18:00, progression being still slow and costly, one guessed that the totality of the village could not be cleaned before night. The head of the Battalion gave the order to stop the movement and scheduled the regrouping of the Battalion for the night in the village of THON TAY. Since all movements are hindered by enemy fire, he also figured that the head companies would not disengage before night. However, the medical evacuations continued.

When night came, the units disengaged without incident and the battalion regrouped in THON TAY. The next day, at dawn, the patrols set foot in PHAM XA, which the V.M. had evacuated during the night.

The combat had cost: 15 dead and 37 wounded of the 26th B.M.T.S. The V.M. left only in the field 9 dead and their weapons (not counting those disappeared under the debris of the pagoda and the village).

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NOTE BY THE E.M.I.F.T.

This unfruitful combat illustrates a rather frequent situation:

- The initial intelligence which governed the plan of maneuvers were inaccurate; the battalions of the 42 regiments were located about 10 kilometers farther to the north.

- While the 26th B.M.T.S. was heavily engaged, the 111/3rd of the Legion came likewise to abut against the village of HOANG XA equally defended and which we could not take before night.

- The artillery positioning, delayed by a great number of important road cuts, could not offer an effective support. The 155s alone could have permitted to effectively fight a sheltered enemy.

- The lack of helicopters caused to employ constantly a company in the guard of the route of evacuation of dead and wounded.

The V.M. used its usual tactics:

- Cover the gross with delaying light elements more or less expendable;

- Combat at short distance, which precludes the intervention of the artillery and the aircraft,

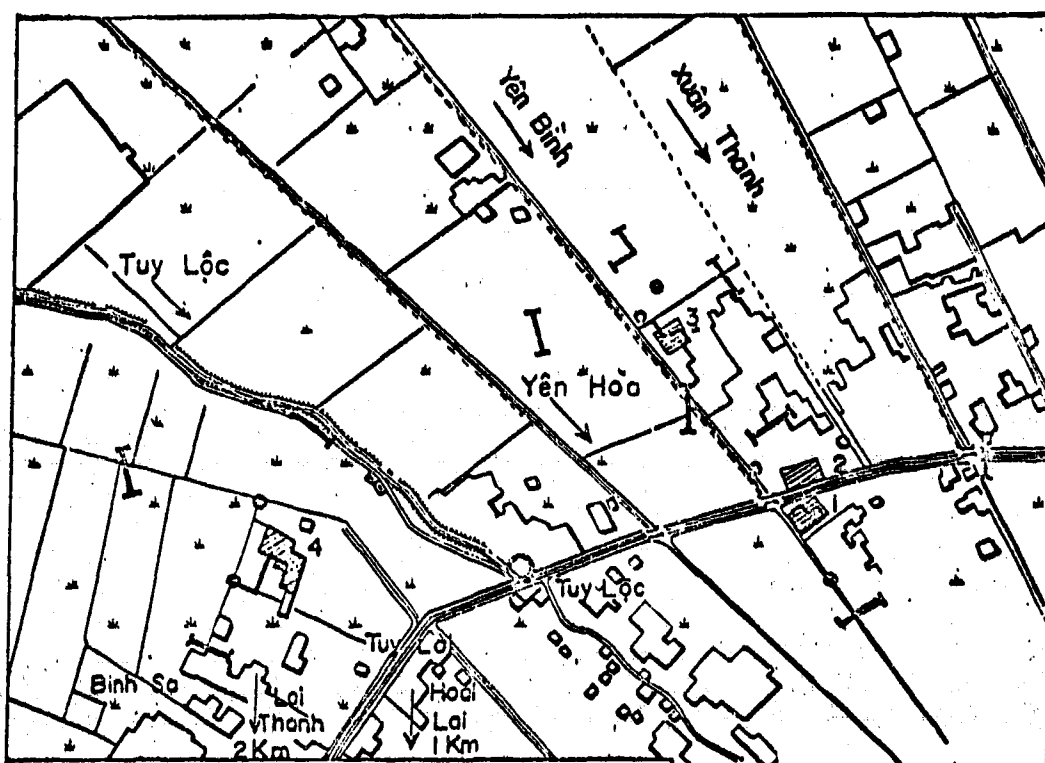
- Gain time,

- Disappear when night comes.






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YEN BINH COMBAT



LEGEND

-  Village
-  Bridge
-  P.A.
-  Stop fire
-  "Sonnette"

SCALE

ÉCHELLE

0 Km

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V.M. ATTACK TO THE DAY'S-END FORMATION OF ONE OF OUR BATTALIONS

YEN BINH COMBAT

night of November 13 to 14, 1952

Upon returning from a series of operations in the BUI CHU, the 26th B.M.T.S., put at the disposal of the PHAT DIEM Sector, was embarked at 15:00 of Nove. 10, 1952, on L.C.Ts. and beached at dusk on Ford 10.

The next day, at dawn, the Battalion took the positions indicated by the Lieutenant-Colonel commander of the Sector with the mission: to cover and defend the PHAT DIEM hamlets, toward the west.

During the day it installed itself at YEN BINH with the forward P.A. installed in the villages north of YAN HOA, YEN BINH, and XUAN THANH.

On November 12, it searched at first the village of TUY LOC and the post that had been taken by the V.M. during the night of November 8 to November 9, then it received the order to help in a road opening, urgently needed, on the encircled post of TAN HAI. The V.M. withdrew upon the arrival of the battalion and contact was not established.

The battalion spent the night of the 12th in closed support points south of YEN BINH and north of TUY LAI and BINH SA.

On the morning of November 13, the Battalion covers the visit to the post of the TUY LOC village by the Lt.-Colonel commander of the Sector and in the afternoon tried to exploit intelligence indicating the presence of two V.M. sections in HOAI LAI and LAI THANH. The search of these hamlets after encirclement did not yield any result; according to the inhabitants, the V.M. had left the same morning.

At 18:00, the Battalion units went back to their billetings for the night. The late hour of return and the intelligence from the Sector on a possible V.M. attack, prompted the Commander of the Battalion to request a contraction of his formation for the night, which was granted by the Kt.-Colonel Commanding the Sector.

The formation, as indicated in the sketch herein, was as follows:

- P.A. 1 - P.C., C.C.B. and 1st Company north of the R.F. 10 and south-west of the YEN BINH hamlet.
- P.A. 2. - The 4th Company at the Pagoda south of the road to the west of the same hamlet.
- P.A. 3 - The 3rd Company at the northwest of the central part of YEN BINH
- P.A. 4 - The 2nd Company and the 205th C.S.M. at the northeast of TUY LAI

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The defense of P.A. 1 & 2 was already organized the previous days: accessory defenses in hexagonal network barring the easiest pathways, dugout combat positions and for 81 and 60 mortars.

The organization of the defense of P.A. 3 & 4 was undertaken by their occupants as soon as they arrived to their respective positions and continued after night fall. The men ate afterwards, around 21:00.

Following intelligence received, order was given to all Company commanders to have their men sleep at the combat positions, half of the strength awake.

At 18:00 the stop fires were prepared and notified by radio to the Captain in charge of the coordination of the various batteries of the Sector. These stop fires are indicated in the sketch herein.

The first part of the night went without incident, although toward 23:30 the post at the TUY LOC Bridge informed that the V.M. had blown up one of their own mines and that they could be heard digging for emplacements. Artillery fire 500 meters to the north of the post was then launched. Around 02:45 numerous volleys heard at several kilometers to the west put everybody on the alert.

Shortly after, the P.A.3 "sonnettes" heard shovel noises near them and they fall back and give the alarm.

Shortly before 03:00 a brutal attack started. Hundreds of mortar shells of all calibers fell on the P.A. 1 & 2. Next day, were found in the positions 60 and 80 caliber unexploded shells.

A few minutes later, the P.A. 3 suffered its first assault and its Company Commander, Lt. C.... requested the artillery stop fire scheduled to the east-north and west sides. The V.M. kept renewing its attacks supported by S.R. and S.K.Z. gun fire, which caused great materiel and personnel damage (one 60 mortar and one machine gun were destroyed).

Lt. C. kept requesting closer stop fire. The artillery men multiply their efforts and keep firing until the tempo has to be reduced because of the overheating of the barrels.

For a whole hour the C.3 resisted the V.M. assaults with real heroism. There was a succession of attacks and local counter-attacks. Each bit of ground, each Cainha, were bravely defended, but the valuable elements were diminishing, the heads of section disappear one after the other; two are killed, two other (one of them the S/Lt. G. ...) are wounded seriously. Lt. C. ... himself was wounded in the face by fragments of a hand grenade.

Toward 3:45, this Lt. who had been incessantly requested closer fire, announced that his position was entirely submerged, that he was partially defending the P.C. on the terrain not yet occupied by the enemy, and requested artillery fire on the hamlet he was occupying. Taking advantage of this firing, he could have his men dispersed in the paddy-fields, taking with him the few riflemen still alive.

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The 3rd Company P.A., in spite of the great number of individual acts of heroism performed, did not exist any more: the machine guns and the mortars were dismantled and scattered in the flooded paddy fields, from which they will partially be recovered tomorrow.

In the meanwhile, P.A. 1 and P.A. 2 continued to be heavily harassed by mortars. After 3:30 the P.A. 1 was directly assaulted and attacked. The V.N. assaults continued until day break; first against the north side, then against the east side. One attempt through the west was stopped by a machine gun from the P.A. 2 and no other attempt was undertaken from this side.

The artillery of PHAT DIEM and then the Navy guns fired continuously to benefit the P.A. 1, bringing the fire each time closer.

About 4:30 the enemy succeeded in setting foot and in occupying parts of the north side. The attack was repelled by immediate counter-attacks. Some houses were lost and recovered several times in succession; the defenders suffered losses but they held their ground. The enemy was equally obstinate. We were running out of ammunition but the day touched at its end and brought us hope.

About 4:00 the Battalion commander, noticing that the P.A. 4 was not directly assaulted, gave the THY LAI elements the order to fall back for a counter-attack.

This order could be only partially executed. The TUY LOC Bridge post had mined R.I.10 road near the post and Commander refused to clear the mines for the night. The two companies then had to make a long detour through the south (the V.N. forces were positioned north of the post), which meant wallowing through the flooded paddy fields and crossing a number of streams. In spite of this exhausting march being made comparatively rapid, they arrived only in time for the last counter-attack.

Because of the delay of this movement, the late hour, the serious losses and the running short of ammunition, the Battalion commander decided to bring in in small groups the elements of the P.A. 2 (in spite of the fact that the automatic weapons of the enemy swept the stream separating Post 1 from Post 1). The movement was executed by sections, which were engaged at 4:00 as they were arriving.

The V.N. assaults continued without respite; once they arrived at 20 meters from the post. The last one took place at day break (6:25). It was repelled.

The first elements of the 2nd Company and of the 205th C.S.M. arrived. The two units participated in the final counter-attack launched at 6:30 and permitting to retake the P.A. before the enemy had time to search it and discover that our elements were isolated.

During the course of this counter-attack, the 2nd Company encountered the V.N. delaying elements which refuse to surrender preferring to die to the last man. One of them went so far as to counter-attack by himself alone, with mounted bayonet, against a whole section.

At night a request for rocket flares dropped from bombardiers was sent.

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but it was not granted. One had also requested fighters but the first plane, a Morane, arrived only at 7:30 coinciding with the appearance of a streak of fog which made observation difficult.

This delay of the air force did not allow the exploitation to full extent of the V.M. defeat. The enemy however was overtaken in part, by the bombers and the fighters, on a farther line of villages.

The Battalion had held its ground and the V.M. will always remember its motto "Keep out!".

But the victory cost us plenty:

5 noncommissioned E Officers	dead
4 " A "	dead
1 private E	dead
22 troopers A	dead
32 dead	

9 disappeared (1 private E and 8 troopers A)
98 wounded (among which 2 Officers)

2 officers and 30 noncoms and men slightly wounded.

The losses of the 2 V.M. battalions of the 48 Regiment that participated in the attack, supported by a heavy weapons battalion of the 32 Division, were:

450 dead (as per the intelligence later collected).

We recovered a great amount of armament.

NOTE BY THE E.M.I.F.T.

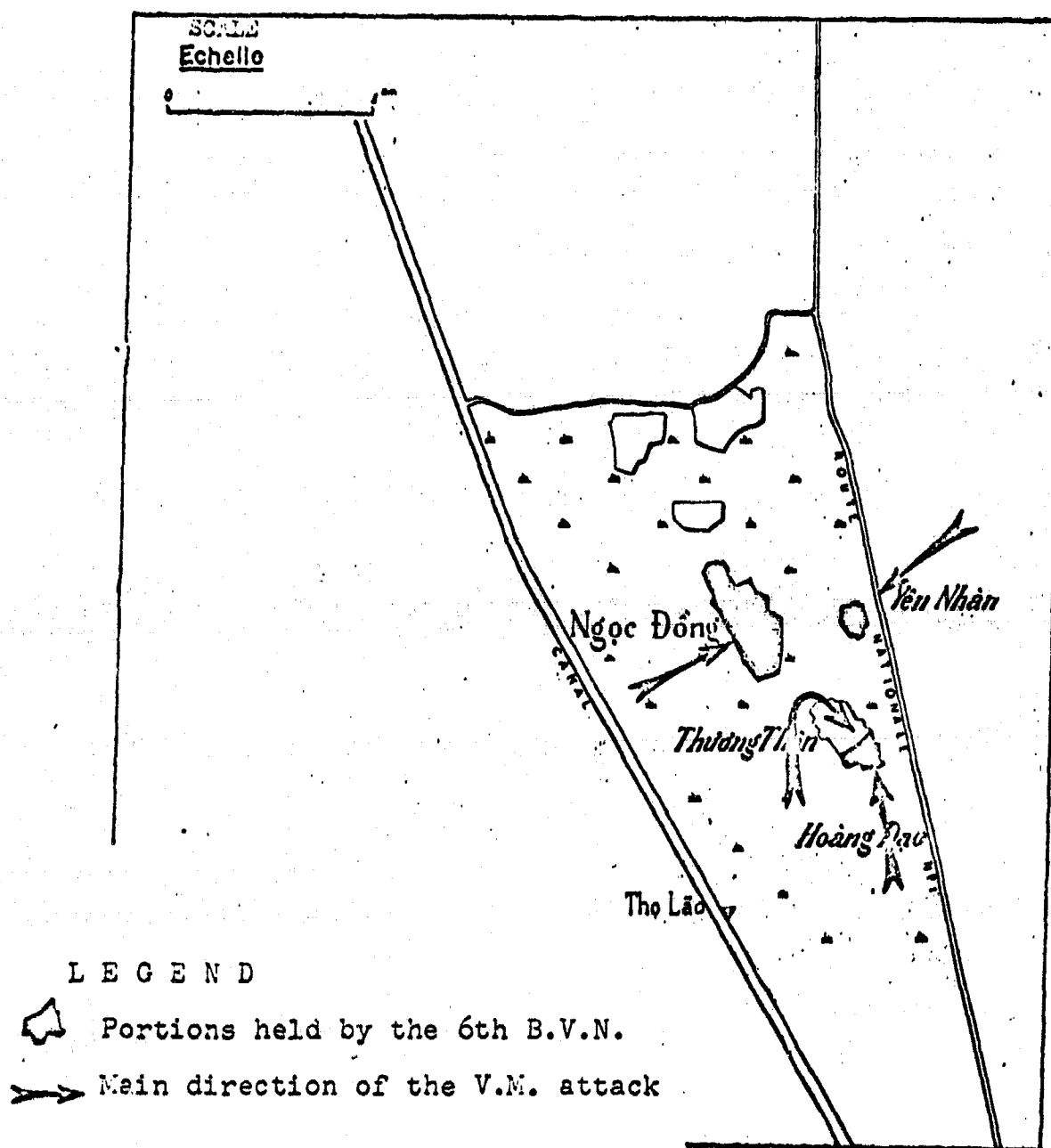
It is true that the magnificent resistance of the 26th B.M.T.S. could have been even more effective if the Battalion had not received the mission to articulate with 4 support points, since they could not support themselves mutually.

A battalion constituting a center of resistance has the possibility of breaking all the assaults.

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6TH B.V.N. COMBAT



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V.M. ATTACK TO THREE VILLAGES DEFENDED BY ONE OF OUR BATTALIONS

6th B.V.N. COMBAT

night of March 30-31, 1953

On March 10, 1953, at 14:30 a message by hand from the PHU LY Sector confirmed the joint action of V.M. Battalions and Regiments 46 and 64, of short duration, against the posts held by the 6th B.V.N.

Immediately a meeting was held of all the unit commanders, staff officers and D.L.O., at the Battalion P.C., to pass secret and direct orders regarding the reorganization of the defense formations and the general fire plan.

6th B.V.N. FORMATION

1. NGOC DONG P.A. : Battalion P.C. - C.C.B. - D.L.O. - 1st & 2nd companies.
2. THUONG THON P.A. : 2nd Company in closed P.A. at half the village south, plus light elements to the northwest of this village.
3. YEN NHAN P.A. : 4th Company less the 2 Section CHI LONG Garrison, plus 1 B.C.D. Section (1) and Militiamen Cadres without automatic weapons.
(1) NOTE - B.C.D. or Bao-Chin-Doan, a sort of regular militia assigned to a province).

The defense formations were inspected on site, personally by the head of the Battalion and the heads of the companies.

"Sonnettes" system

The units "sonnettes" got in position at 20:00 and up to 06:00 (two or three "sonnettes" per company).

RADIO CONNECTION

Normal recesses on the 300 stations, on the hour, up to 22:00.

- Permanent listening since the start of fire, after 22:00.

COURSE OF EVENTS

At 22:00 a "sonnette" observed a suspect group of 4 V.M. at the THO LAO Ford, kills one and withdraws to the P.A.2 to alert the Commander.

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At 23:00 a silent alarm was circulated inside the company and another "sonnette" is sent out.

At 24:00 another "sonnette" who was returning observed 800 meters more to the south, numerous V.M. advancing there toward north. The forward V.M. elements came forth immediately after this retreating "sonnette" and the attack started to be initiated.

At the same time the 3rd Company "sonnette" fell back hastily and reported on the probable movements of the V.M. elements on the National Road No. 1, toward the S.W.

The general alarm to the battalion was sounded.

ATTACK TO THE P.A. SOUTH (Hoang Dao)

At the beginning of a violent frontal attack, 2 Section heads were wounded, another is killed and a noncom (N.....) was made prisoner. Having lost the radio connection, the Commander of the Company (Lt. H.) tried to regroup his elements to form a redoubt.

In spite of a savage attack, the Company stood firmly, from midnight to 02:00. At that moment only one group remained around the P.C. So, reduced to impotence, Lt. H.... was forced to disappear. The stop fire baptised "Yvette", started at due time in support of the unit, became useless in spite of some V.M. losses.

ATTACK TO THE P.A. EAST (Yen Nhan)

Elements of the 4th Company situated before night fall at Road No. 1 with the mission to protect the east flank of the formation, attempted, after running out of ammunition, to fall back to the YEN NHAN Post.

Unfortunately, the Militia Cadres Section, reinforced with a machine gun assigned to flank the east side of the P.A., gave up prematurely. Because of this, a gap was produced which enabled the V.M. to take from behind the B.C.D. Section and to inflict it some losses.

In spite of this critical situation, the Company Commander (Lt. T) organized a redoubt to oppose the heavy assaults.

Resistance lasted until 02:30 when the radio connection with the battalion P.A. was cut. At this moment, Lt. T... was hit by two bullets: on the back and on the right elbow, besides some splinters on the right cheek.

At 04:30 V.M. yellings were heard but then silence followed.

In the meanwhile, artillery fires called "Helene" and "Colette" continued as flank support of the 3rd Company (Ngoc Dong) in order to disengage the YEN NHAN Post.

At 07:00 one could still hear signs of resistance in that island which endured so many attacks.

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ATTACK TO THE NGOC DONG P.A.

After 02:30, having already taken the southern P.A. and weakened the resistance of the eastern P.A., the V.M. undertook the attack of the NGOC DONG P.A. by the east and west sides.

Side east was continually battered by the "Helene" stop fire, and all the V.M. assaults were broken.

Contrarily, on the west side, real human waves were thrust successively against a forward position (a school) held by the 1st Company. After 2 rejected attacks, the enemy launches a third one. The small defense element abandoned the school and fell back on the pagoda aligned with the west edge.

At 04:30 a counter-attack permitted to retake the school and to restore the initial formation.

BALANCE OF LOSSES

A. Friendly :

2 noncoms and 12 men dead

1 officer, 5 noncoms and 27 men wounded

2 noncoms and 68 men disappeared

B. Rebels

27 counted dead

100 probable dead

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SUCCESSFUL COUNTER-AMBUSH BY AN ASSIGNED DETACHMENT AND UNSUCCESSFUL AMBUSH AT THE SAME PLACE

HAO KIET COMBATS

16 November 1952 and
16 November 1953

On November 15, the Commander of the NINH BINH Sub-Sector received intelligence that a strong rebel ambush was being prepared for the 17th or the 18th at HAO KIET and at LUONG KIET.

On the evening of the 15th the Head of the Militia at COI SON reported that late that afternoon about 300 rebels were moving from HO SON to HAO KIET disguised as harvesters and carrying sheaves of rice.

THE TERRAIN

Road No. 10 between MY COI and TO CAU runs almost in straight line on a SW-NE direction. It looks like an embankment wide enough to permit traffic of vehicles, with paddy-fields on both sides. The left side fields were flooded.

To the west, in several places there are tombs located at a distance of 100 to 300 meters from the road; the XUAN BANG and CAO PHUONG villages are about 1 kilometer away from the road.

On the east, within a stretch of over 3 kilometers, parallel to the road, are the villages of HAO KIET and LUONG KIET. Their northern and southern edges are about 500 meters from the road, but the center of them is only at 200 meters.

THE RESOURCES

Initially, the Sub-Sector Commander had the following at his disposal

- 2 companies of the 59th B.V.N. (1st & 4th Companies)
- 1st Company of the 22nd B.T.A.
- 1 Section of 50 natives of the 514th C.L.S.V.
- 1 tank platoon of the R.B.C.E.O.
- 1 artillery section (105 mm)

About 14:00 the following reinforcements arrived:

- 2 Commandos
- 2 Companies of Amphibious sub-groupments.

MANEUVER CONCEPT

On the evening of the 15th the order from the Sector arrived to open the road for the 16th. The Commander of the 59th B.V.N. therefore decided to take the following measures:

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I. E G E N D

SCALE 1/25,000

Post

Mechanized Companies
of the Amphibious Group.

- CP
- M
- A
- 25
- 1
- 4
- 22

Navy Commando

Nat ive Section

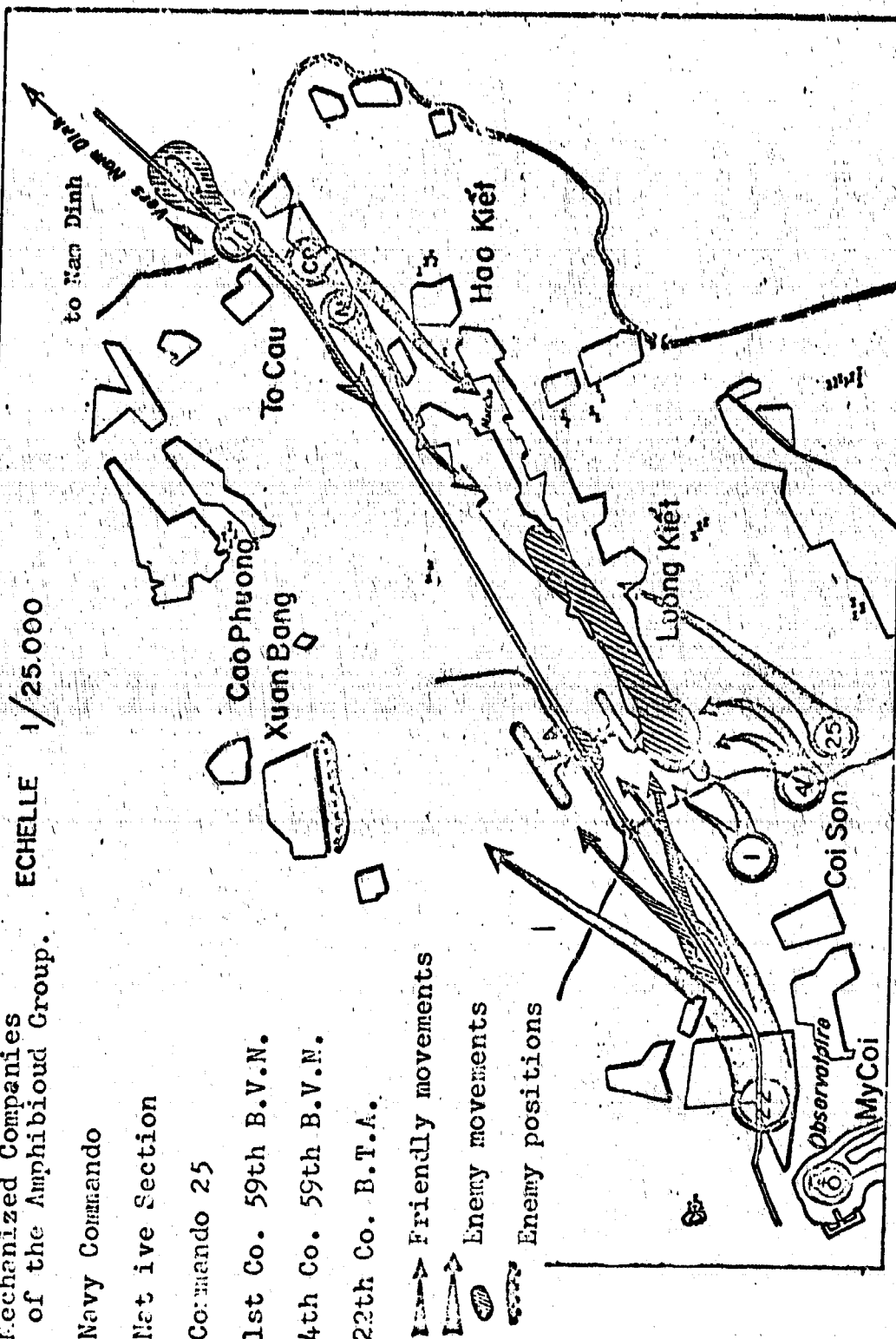
Commando 25

1st Co. 59th B.V.N.

4th Co. 59th B.V.N.

22th Co. B.T.A.

ECHELLE 1/25,000



Friendly movements

Enemy movements

Enemy positions

Observatory

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- On Road No. 10 the Native Section (Sergeant P. ...), departing from the MY COI Post, shall execute a normal road opening.
- The 1st and 4th Companies of the 59th B.V.N. shall march directly to the southern edge of HAO KIET, where normally the lock of the rebel ambush will be located.
- The tank platoon shall act as reserve on the road, at the level of the edges (SW of LUONG KIET), ready to support the action of the 1st and 4th Companies, or to engage supporting the native section.
- The company of the 22nd B.T.A. shall advance as reserve echelon on the road, ready to support the native section or to intervene in support of the committed elements, at HAO KIET.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE OPERATION

The combat developed in four phases, the first two simultaneous.

- 1st Phase : Attack of the southern portion of LUONG KIET by the 1st and 4th Companies (from 08:00 to noon).
- 2nd Phase : Start of the rebel ambush on the road and disengagement of the native section by the tanks (from 09:15 to about 11:00).
- 3rd Phase : Arrival of reinforcements from NAM DINH, which will penetrate in HAO KIET by the north. Then simultaneous advance of these elements and those of the south marching to meet them (from noon to 16:00 approximately).
- 4th Phase : Connection between the elements from the north and from the south and abatement of the entire formation toward the east to come to the eastern edge of HAO KIET.

1st PHASE - ATTACK TO THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF HAO KIET :

At 08:30 the 1st Company, starting through the paddy fields at the head of the formation, was joined upon reaching the southern tip of LUONG KIET.

The right side elements, having progressed quicker because of a more solid terrain, penetrated 50 meters into the village when, all of a sudden, the rebels opened fire, causing one dead and 7 wounded, repulsing our elements pushing them into the paddy fields where they installed themselves facing east at about 200 meters from the first company. The left side elements advanced through a more difficult terrain, and were stopped at 200 meters from the SW edge of the village.

The 4th Company which followed behind, takes position facing the southern edge at the east of the village where the terrain was more favorable.

The left side elements made another attempt to assault the village, but they were stopped.

After a while, a half-hour halt, when the heavy weapons, the tanks

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and the 120 mortars of the Artillery Section of MY COI, came to this portion of the village, 2 sections of the 4th Company launched an assault through the eastern and southern edges and, after a hand to hand battle which lasted 15 minutes, they set foot to the village, bringing back the first prisoners and the first armament captured.

Simultaneously, the left side elements of the 1st Company enter the village by the west.

Exploiting immediately their initial success, the sections continued their advance by fighting hand to hand, routing the enemy, without giving it time to react. The other sections in their turn penetrated also into the village, placing themselves to the right side of the former, since at this point the village widens.

In half an hour, the elements had taken 400 meters of terrain and the advance and search continued until 11:00. The sections of the two companies, side by side, cleaned up the various resistance points which still tried to check the advance.

Shortly before noon, the order was given to stop the advance, since a massive intervention of the aircraft had been requested.

The first prisoners taken confirmed the presence of the 722 Battalion in HAO KIET LUONG KIET.

2nd PHASE :

Progressing on the road clearing the mines ahead of the tanks, the Native Section reached the level of the SW tip of HAO KIET, when they were joined by the 1st and the 4th Companies.

Continuing its progression, the section, 500 meters farther, fell into the middle of the rebel ambush. One rebel company on the right of the road and another on the left, emerge from the paddy fields launching the attack against the native section, putting half of the section out combat before they came out from the surprise.

Immediately, the tanks which followed, came into their aid succeeding with their violence to stop the assault of two V.M. companies while the native section regrouped around the tanks.

The 22nd B.T.A. company arrived at that time, attacked by the left the rebels elements which were trying to flee toward XUAN BANG crawling through the paddy fields. They are immediately taken by the tank machine guns, resulting in a carnage.

After one hour of savage combat, the road was cleared of enemy elements, at the expense of sacrificing many natives of the section.

3rd PHASE :

Late in the morning, between 11:00 and noon, connection is established by road between our tanks and those coming from the north.

The 25th Commando, just arrived from NINH BINH, takes position in

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the formation, at the right side of the elements inside HAO KIET, receiving the mission to take care of the eastern edge.

The Navy Commando, arrived from NAM DINH, installed itself as reserve between the road and the western edge of HAO KIET.

The two companies of the amphibious sub-groupment, arrived from NAM DINH, were thrust into HAO KIET by the north and progressed to meet the elements coming from the south.

Shortly after noon, since the air bombing did not take place, the 1st and 4th Companies received the order to continue their advance, the 1st through the eastern portion of the village, the 4th through the western portion.

New resistance points were discovered and the 1st Company was stopped by a machine gun. The 4th Company could continue its advance and toward 16:00 took contact with the elements coming from the north, while the engineer section of MY COI took position at the gap between the 1st and the 4th company.

4th PHASE :

Being late in the afternoon, the Battalion Commander gave the order to all the formation to face east and go up to the SE edges of the villages.

The movement is immediately executed, the Navy Commando taking position between the Amphibious Sub-Groupement and the 4th Company.

Through a late hour attack which lasted half an hour, our elements dominated the last rebel resistance points.

The day is touching to its end and there is no time to conduct a more thorough search of the paddy fields and the villages, although it would have been profitable.

During this phase, the aviation finally arrived but its intervention had to be interrupted, because of the elements in contact with the enemy were too close to same.

BALANCE OF LOSSES

- A. Friendly :
- 4 dead
 - 17 native disappeared
 - 1 officer, 1 noncom and 16 men wounded.
- B. Rebels :
- Over 200 dead
 - Number of wounded (the population of DAI IAI and HO was commandeered on the nights of the 16, 17, and 18, to remove the dead and wounded).
 - 20 prisoners
 - great amount of armament recovered.

The success of HAO KIET was made possible thanks to the intelligence which permitted to take in the enemy. But chiefly thanks to the courage of cadres and men of the 59th B.V.N., to the sacrifices of the Native section, and to the magnificent fighting of the R.B.C.E.O. tank teams.

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REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE NATIVE SECTION

The opening patrol was almost completed. The men advanced slowly, the sun being already high. Suddenly, a shower of bullets and hand grenades fell upon us. From everywhere emerged V.M. men their heads and backs covered with sheaves of rice. It was the classical ambush with all its horror but also with all its beauty. In effect, what is there more beautiful than the heroism of these encircled native of the Section, who even knowing that they are lost continue to hold.

We saw a young native, the only one having a sub-machine gun, cover the fall back of his section standing at the middle of the road battered by the automatic weapons of the rebels.

Another native, holding an automatic rifle, died still holding his arm as though trying to prevent the enemy from taking it from him. Another, very young, maybe only 18, with 15 days service, taking advantage of the confusion of the combat, to lie down in the rice among the V.M., came back to the post 2 hours later, with his Mauser in one hand, his bayonet in the other, still smiling.

More than half of our strength was already out of combat, and the yelling hordes of V.M. still renewed their attacks.

What hope remained?... the tanks!

Purring of aircraft engines, volleys of shells... and the encirclement was broken.

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF PLATOON OF THE R.B.C.E.O. TANKS

We had scarcely reached the village of LUONG KIET that numerous rebel elements emerged from either side of the road.

The "JEMMAPES" tank started immediately to fire on the village, then remained to support the infantry that was entering the village; the other two tanks and the half-track advance rapidly to the rescue of a forward section heavily engaged in the road.

The head tank "MARENGO", after having overshoot a V.M. section which was ambushed by the road, stopped and started to fire point blank against the automatic weapons.

In my function as head of the tank platoon, riding a "ABOUKIR", I advanced in second position; I had to stop also, leaving the enemy between the interval of two tanks. From then on our fire was ferocious, but the enemy in spite of heavy losses responded with desperate energy. Hand grenades came to explode on the tracks of my tank, others in front of my vehicle, smashing the pilot's periscope.

The riflement of the half-track often found themselves at 6 meters from the V.M., contending with the automatic rifles.

A moment came when the V.M., disorganized, with many dead in the field, stopped firing and it was easy for us to take prisoners.

After replenishing of ammunition and tending a wound of the head of the platoon, were back to the field to recover 1 automatic rifle, 1 Mas 36 rifle, 2 submachine guns, clips, mines, hand grenades and about 1000 rounds for automatic rifle.

ANECDOTE

After having had its two preceding attacks stopped by automatic weapons, the 2nd Section had just set foot in HAO KIET. The riflemen search the hedges and reduce the last isolated resistance points.

The machine guns rattled. But in spite of the noise, Corporal G.... heard near him a characteristic click. A V.M. man with an automatic rifle had pressed the trigger. Fortunately, the magazine was empty. A ferocious hand to hand fight ensued. With one hand, G.... was trying to take the automatic rifle from the V.M., with the other he was pounding his head. The Viet was tough, but finally the 85 kilos of corporal carry the victory.

Minutes later, what remains of the vigorous Viet is taken to the P.C. of the battalion for interrogation, while corporal G.... proud of his captured weapon goes to the head of the section to use it after making sure he had replenished its magazine.

NOTE BY THE E.M.I.F.T.

One year, day by day, after this successful ambush, the V.M. succeeded again in the same spot in laying another ambush which cost us heavy losses, for lack of intelligence and because we could not search thoroughly the edges of the villages bordering the road.

ORGANIZATION OF ROAD OPENINGS (Nov. 1953)

Lt. D, Highquarters Commander, was in charge of the openings of road, on the stretches of Road No. 16 on both sides of Post MY COI.

On November 16 he has at his disposal:

- the 515th and 516th Native companies,
- the 1st Company of the B.V.N.
- part of the heavy weapons of the C.C.B. of the 59th B.V.N.
- one section of 105 H.M.2 in position at MAY COI.

The day before, one had reminded Lt. D..... that the 16th November was the anniversary of a defeat inflicted to the V.M. in the village of LUONG KIET. Therefore, Lt. D.... decided to use for the road opening between MY COI and TO CAU the two native companies, instead of one as it was the practice.

He put Adjutant T..... in charge of the two units.

He himself remained at MY COI, at the observatory of the Highquarters (which was also his office) and from where he could see the stretch of road to be opened and where he disposed of radio and telephone communications.

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ORDERS GIVEN TO THE ROAD OPENING ELEMENTS

Post of TO CAU intervention element - To march on the road to meet the MY COI native companies.

Elements will be covered by the Post fire.

516th Native Company - will advance as head force and shall install three small security posts.

Besides, the company shall furnish a group for the personal protection of the Adjutant Commander of the road opening elements.

515th Native Company - shall overpass the fixed security posts furnished by the 516th company and will advance following the road axis until meeting the TO CAU POST elements; besides, it will clear the road of mines.

1st Company of the 59th B.V.N. shall remain at the Post as reserve.

This unit, assembled on a platform mid-way up to the post, can be directly commanded by telephone by Lt. D.....

DEVELOPMENT OF THE OPERATION

To be noted that on the morning of November 16 there was a thick fog.

1st Part of the operation

The positioning of the small security posts was executed without incident, by the 516th Company.

2nd Part :

The 515th Company advanced on the road in double column, clearing the road of mines. Srgt. M.... placed at the head of the formation several scouts that marched about 50 meters forward, on each side of the road.

At 07:30 junction was accomplished with the TO CAU post road opening elements.

At that time, at the signal given with a gong, V.M. elements ambushed at the edges of LUONG KIET and HAO KIET to the south and at the edges of XUAN DANG to the north, opened fire on the security posts and on the moving elements.

Simultaneously, the TO CAU Post was concealed by the fire of seven automatic weapons and two 60 mortars in position on the NW and SE of the post.

Two V.M. companies assaulted the security posts, the elements of the 515th Company (which were on guard) and the TO CAU Post road opening elements.

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Adjutant T... was at the head of the formation, at the junction point of the two road opening elements from TO CAU and MY COI. Sergt. M... was on the road about 150 meters farther back.

After some skirmishes and having offered some resistance, apparently rather weak, the two native units were made prisoner or dispersed.

Adjutant T... and Sgt. M.... fell back immediately toward north, pursued by a V.M. group. Corporal B, assistant to Adjutant T..., remained on the spot. Adjutant T.... tells of having seen him trying to disengage himself with the help of a submachine gun, and then he lost sight of him.

The action had lasted about 15 minutes. The V.M. continued to fire on the TO CAU Post for another fifteen minutes, then withdrew.

LIEUTENANT D.'s ACTION

a. At the first shots, Lt. D..... ordered to open fire to the Post 81 mortars against the north edge of the village of LUONG KIET.

b. Requested fire from the MY COI artillery section against the villages of LUONG KIET and HOA KIET. The fire was executed 4 minutes after the request.

c. He ordered the Commander of the Reserve Company to march with three sections for a collection mission 300 meters east of the bridge located below LUONG KIET.

Having spotted V.M. elements at the SE of the village of COI SON, he insisted on keeping two sections to stop any possible infiltration toward his post.

d. He informed the Commander of the Sub-Sector by radio on the situation and requested reinforcements.

SUB-SECTOR COMMANDER'S ACTION

Head of Battalion, L....., after receiving a radio message from Lt. D....., around 07:45, acted as follows:

a. informed the Sector Commander, who in turn alerted NAM DINH and requested that an observation plane fly over the battlefield; also requested intervention of the artillery, of an infantry element, and tank support.

His triple request was granted.

b. He assembled two sections of the 4th Company of the 59th B.V.N., taking out some personnel from the fortification works, and marched to MY COI where he arrived at 08:15.

c. After having collected some necessary information at the Post, he walked (toward 08:20) to join the elements of the 1st Company of the 59th B.V.N.

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d. It was necessary to open again the road, then search the terrain under the protection of the T.D. platoon arrived from NAM DINH.

e. Upon the arrival from NAM DINH of a Company of the 22nd B.T.A., he assumed the overall command and proceeded to search the village of LUONG KIET where he found a number of blood traces and defensive organizations. He also pursued several V.M. elements fleeing toward south.

BALANCE OF LOSSES

Personnel:

4 dead

9 wounded

73 disappeared

Armament losses were heavy

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AMBUSH LAID TO ONE OF OUR ROAD OPENINGS

Each day, the NHAT TUU Headquarters held by the 2nd Company of the 9th B.V.N., had the main mission of opening the portion of the road between the DONG VAN Post and NGOC THI PHO.

In the morning of March 3, the road opening elements for the above road consisted of:

- One Section of Regulars (R)
- Two Native Sections (S1 and S2)
- One platoon of reconnaissance troops V.N. (B1 and B2).

The troops were articulated as follows:

- a. A native Section ahead searching systematically each side of the road, while one man detects the mines with the S.C.R. 625 -(S1.)
- b. Another Native Section follows the head element at a distance of 100 meters, ready to give immediate support in case of attack -(S 2)
- c. A Section of Regulars, marching at a distance also of 100 meters from the 2nd Section of Natives, acts as support element.(R)
- d. A third Section of Natives remains at DONG VAN as reserve element (S 3)

400 meters behind the Regular Section follows an armor patrol, the rest of the platoon having remained on alert at DONG VAN.

At 09:30, all was normal. The road opening elements were already in position as follows (see sketch):

- a. A Native Section 200 meters from the NGOC THI PHO cross-road, followed by a second Native Section.
- b. The Regulars Section NE of TU THON.

The road opening seemed almost completed.

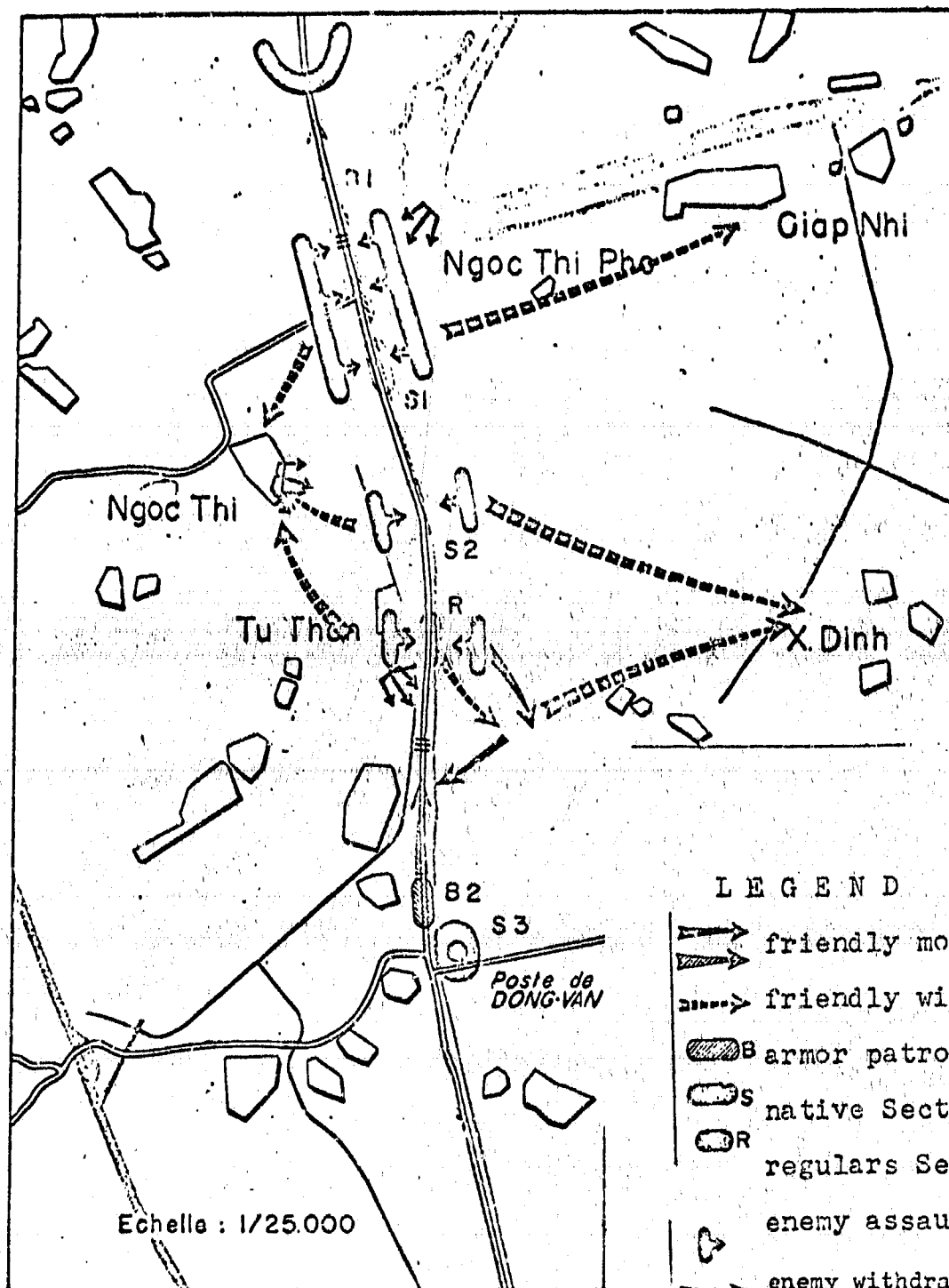
The head element advanced toward the NGOC THI PHO cross-road and was beginning to take position to protect the tanks, which needed to turn around at this point.

Scarcely a combat car and a half-track had overtaken the head of the column, that the V.M. fire started on all sides. The heavy enemy weapons (one 57 cannon, machine guns, 81 mortars) emplaced at the bend of the SONG, aimed particularly against the vehicles, while the V.M., dressed in olive drab and helmets camouflaged with branches, came out from pits at 50 meters from the road, and assaulted the tip of the Native sections and threw hand grenades against the tanks.

Surprised by the violence and suddenness of the attack, as well as by

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Echelle : 1/25.000

SCALE : 1/25,000

LEGEND

- friendly movements
- friendly withdrawal
- armor patrol
- native Section
- regulars Section
- enemy assault
- enemy withdrawal
- enemy support
- enemy mine

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the great number of V.M. troops (estimated at about one battalion), the vehicles hastily disengaged themselves toward north, leaving the head section to hold alone an enemy Company.

After a resistance of about half an hour, the Section was submerged by the V.M. which succeeded in capturing 2/3 of the strength, but losing a great number of men, killed and wounded, among which a head of Section later captured.

The second Native Section defended itself the best it could and tried to disengage by its own fire not only the remaining natives of the head elements, but also the rear Section of Regulars which was by then assailed by more than one V.M. Company.

The Regulars, under the orders of Chief - Adjutant D...., engaged in a ferocious fight with the enemy, with hand to hand fighting since the very beginning. The fire teams fired point blank on the successive waves of assailants, felling many on the paddy fields.

A man handling an automatic rifle was killed by a bullet through his head. The V.M. men rushed then toward the other servers of the weapon, the head of the team among them; the latter, before being killed, felled five rebels with his Thompson.

Near by, the battle between the shock elements and the V.M. was raging. Chief-Adjutant D... and his men, cut from the rear guard and cornered 150 meters away from the road on a trail east of TU THONG, continued to defend themselves.

During this time, alerted by the infantry network, the artillery of NHAT TUU fired its first shells on the heavy weapons rebel emplacements.

At DONG VAN, the other vehicles of the Platoon and the Native Section rushed to the battle field since the first moments. They were engaged by a head plug and they had to stop to clean out the mines from the road. However, they arrived on time to disengage Section D and the Native Section. A few minutes later they were joined by a reinforcement Section arrived from NHAT TUU with the Officer-Chief of the Artillery Section.

Upon sighting the reinforcements, the V.M. hastily abandoned the road and left toward NGOC THI, XOM DINH and GIAP NHI. Pursued by the artillery fire and the tanks, they could not even take their dead; they left eight bodies on the field.

The combat had lasted 45 minutes;

BAIANCE OF LOSSES

A. Friendly

- 2 dead, among which 1 noncom.
- 2 wounded
- 26 disappeared (mostly natives)

B. Rebels

- about 50 dead (8 left on the field)
- number of wounded unknown.

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ABSTRACT FROM THE REPORT
of Lt. Commander of the Combat Cars Platoon

Around 09:00, the portion of road DONG VAN - NGOC THI was opened after systematic search by the infantry men. A thin but persistent rain makes difficult observation by field glasses.

When the patrol, commanded by First Sergeant B....., arrived at the cross-road, the combat started. The V.M. exploded two mines at 30 cm of our wheels, at the same time they jumped out of their pits to assault our vehicles.

The Patrol head looked behind and seeing an enemy Company surrounding him, gave the order to dash toward north in order to escape encirclement. For this purpose, the server of cannon 37 had to fire several times to clear the road, while the head of the patrol was busy at the rear with a 50 machine gun, to disengage his half-track, which is being attacked by machine gun and hand grenades. He is hit by a fragment of grenade at one finger.

In spite of the explosion of a grenade on the top, which wounded the server of the 50 machine gun, the Head of the Half-Track and his team, helped by the support fire of the head combat car, succeed in escaping from the encirclement by machine gun and grenade fire.

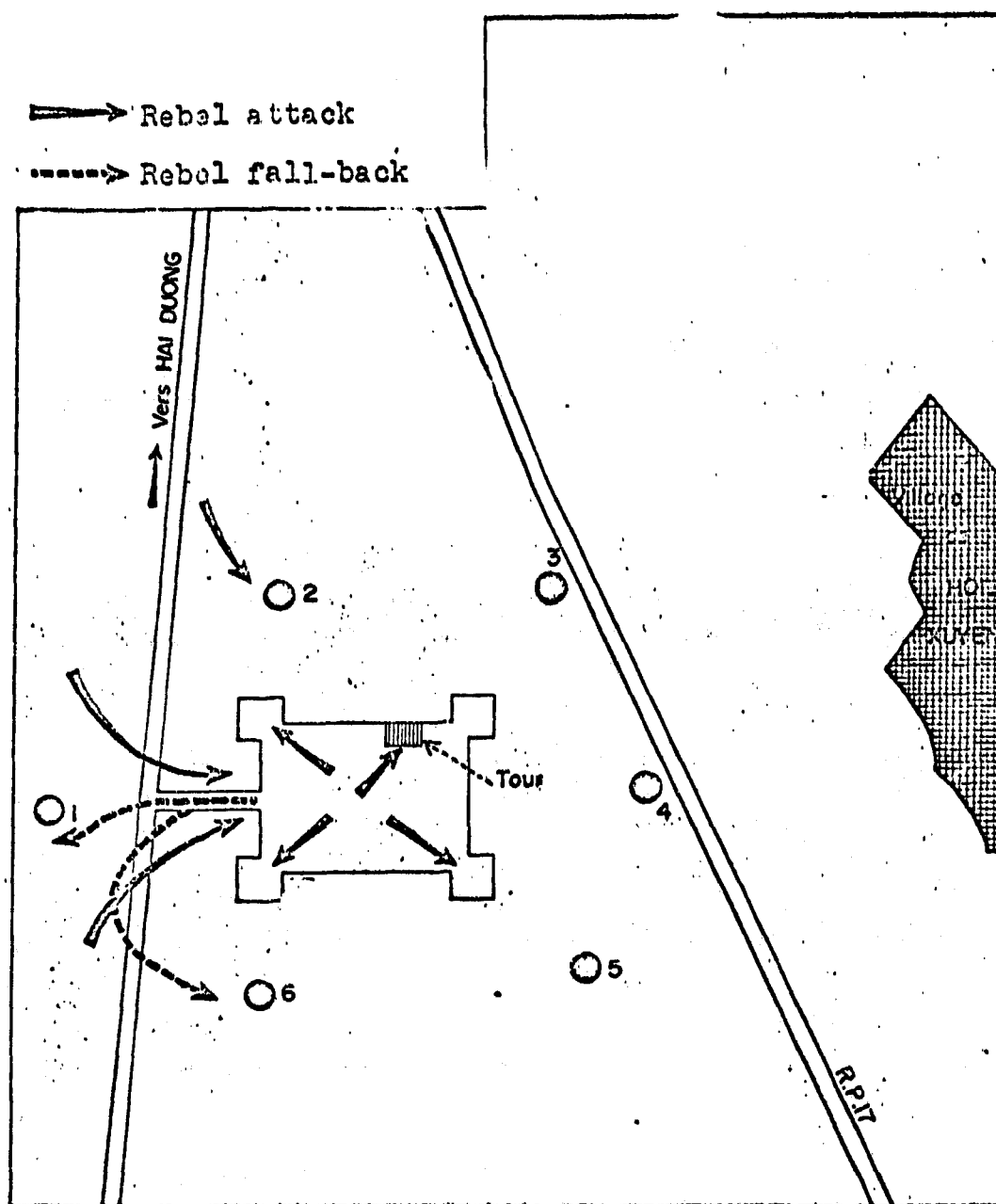
The Patrol commanding combat car, in reserve at DONG VAN, also dashed to the battle field at the first shots. They are stopped by a number of mines, two of which exploded and four of which were recovered on the road, and are also stopped by the fire of the enemy automatic arms, 200 meters away from the village of TU THON. Our fire disengaged the Section of Regulars, which was surrounded by a company.

After disengaging this Section and after having cleared the mines of the road and the V.M. on both sides, we advanced toward north, thus helping the head patrol in its mission.

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ATTACK TO THE GIA LOC POST



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PARTIAL CARRYING OFF OF A SUPPORT POINT IN PROCESS OF MODERNIZATION

Attack to the GIA LOC Post

On December 6, 1953

The GIA LOC Post was the Command Post of the GIA LOC Headquarters, which was part of the autonomous Sub-Sector of HAIDUONG.

The Post, in process of modernization, comprised:

- The old post (a square of buildings rather old, with an observation tower and flanking wings at the four corners).
- Six blocks under construction.

The normal garrison was:

- One Officer : Capt. C....., Commander of the Post.
- 13 Europeans and 73 North-Africans of the 12th Company of the 3/4th RTM.

On December 4, 1953, intelligence collected pointed out to a forthcoming action of the V.M. Regiment 42. Therefore, the garrison of the Post was reinforced with the elements of the 9th Company of the 3/4th R.T.M. commanded by Chief-Adjutant A.... (+ 4 Europeans, 29 North-Africans, and 75 natives).

On December 5, in the afternoon, Capt. C....., commanding the GIA LOC complex, was called to the Command Post of the Sub-Sector, where he was briefed on the mission.

ATTACK TO THE POST

On December 6, at 05:00, the GIA LOC Post was attacked.

Coming from the west in two columns, the V.M. blasted out the barbed wires and marched directly toward the old post, attacking Blockhaus 1 with bazookas and Blockhaus 4 with explosives: Both crumbled over their defenders and the V.M. entered en masse into the old post.

Since 05:05 the security artillery fire from the position fell on the approaches of the post, then after 05:20, came the air-burst shells.

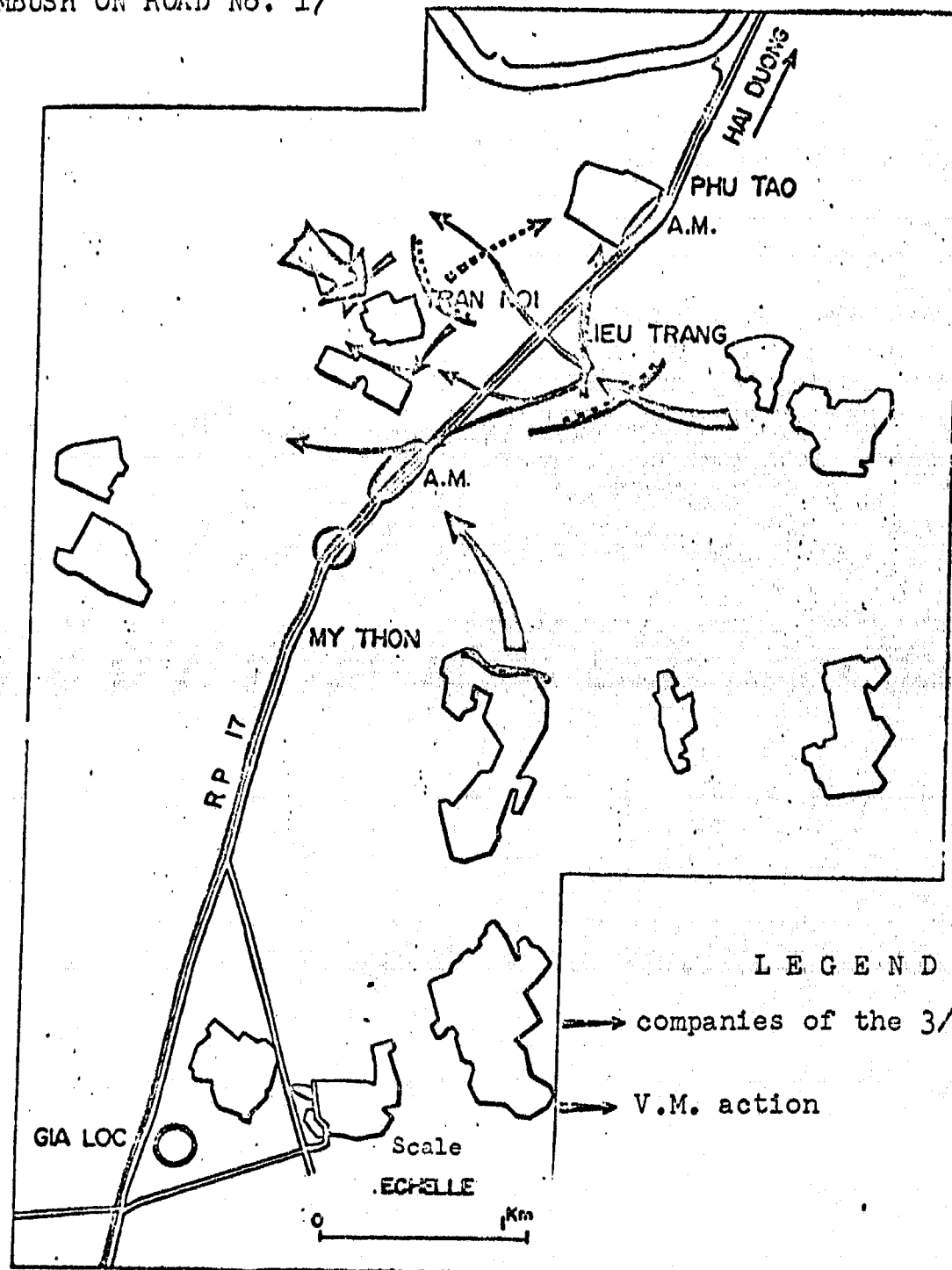
Once inside the old post, the V.M. attacked the internal blockhaus 2 and 3, as well as the tower, which hit by the S.K.Z. collapsed at 05:20.

From then on, the defense of the old post was reduced to the isolated elements, firing from points they had been able to organize.

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AMBUSH ON ROAD No. 17



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At the outside, peripheric block 2, which had been attacked since the beginning, fell. But peripheric blocks 3, 4, 5, and 6 continued to resist.

Around 07:00, the V.M. attempted to evacuate the old post but met with the fire from blocks 1 and 6 and had to dig out a passage. Block 1 was easily reduced by the V.M., but block 6 resisted till the end of all possibility (on 22 occupants: 9 dead, 2 wounded, 2 missing, 5 escapes).

Blocks 3, 4 and 5 continued the fight to merely subsist.

At 07:30, an observation Morane, sent over the battlefield, appraised the situation, which could not be done before since the radio went silent a few minutes after the start of the combat. (1) NOTE - Capt. C...., had nevertheless been able to send a last message: "The V.M. are within the Post. But they will not get me."

The air force was alerted and pursued the V.M. elements fleeing toward the west, the SW and the south.

DISENGAGEMENT OPERATION

At 06:30, the area Commander alerted the G.M. 3 and installed a disengagement post formation. At day break, the March Battalion of the 3/4th R.T.M., reinforced with 2 platoons of combat cars, marched toward GIA LOC by Road No. 17.

Since the departure from HAIDUONG they started to find mines and barriers; the march was slow because of the caution recommended in fear of a powerful ambush to oppose the disengagement of GIA LOC.

At 10:30, the formation of the march Battalion was that indicated in the sketch. Artillery fire had been released against the eastern edges of the LIEU TRANG villages. The Morane had not reported anything abnormal.

At the moment when the 1st Company of March, widely deployed, reached the village of TRAN NOI, a violent fire came out from this and other villages, on both sides of Road No. 17.

Camouflaged V.M. sprung out of the paddy fields in the middle of the March Company, whose commander was killed on the spot. V.M. elements belonging to the 652/42 Battalion from LIEU TRANG, rushed toward west with violent fire.

The 2nd March Company had to fall back at the level of PHU TAC to occupy its edges. V.M. elements came up to 100 meters from the village, while the gross of the column passed through PHU TAO and TRAN NOI marching toward the west, carrying riflemen and natives made prisoners from the 1st March Company. Very many were able to escape at the first moments of the combat.

The situation was quickly restored and, at the arrival of the first elements of the G.M. 3, the 2nd March Company had resumed its advance and reached the edges of TRAN NOI, while Commando 54 was regrouping in the MY THON Post.

Since the beginning of the ambush, at 10:30, the air force intervened

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efficiently over the villages and the paddy fields and almost on the bords of Route No. 17.

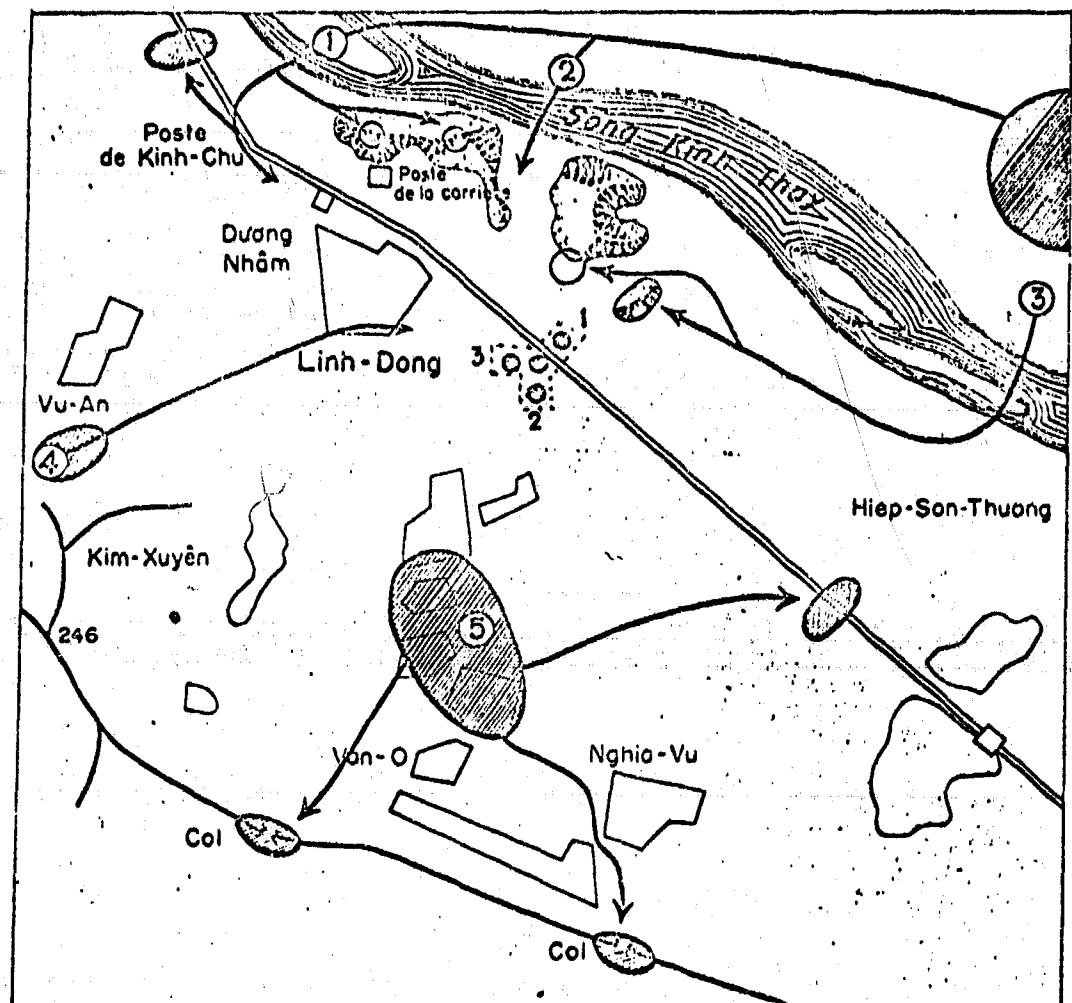
About 11:00, the 1/2nd R.E.I., first battalion of G.M. 3, arrived at the battlefield and undertook the road opening to GIA LOC.

At 12:30, the 1st Muong and the 73rd B.V.N. were on Road No. 17 and the connection with the GIA LOC Post was established at 13:00 by the 1st Muong.

However, during all morning, the survivors at the GIA LOC Post had continued to fire on the V.M. elements passing within range. Having succeeded to put into operation a radio station they continued to inform the relief column on the enemy position, and soon they fell in to receive their battle comrades.

ATTACK TO THE LINH DONG POST

V. M. DISPOSITION



LEGEND

- | | |
|---|---|
| ① 1 Regional Company
+ 2 du-kich Section | ④ 1 Regional Section |
| ② C.P. Engineers Assault
Section, 25 K2 | ⑤ 1 District Company
reinforced with
heavy weapons elements |
| ③ 1 Regional Company (- 1 Sect.) | |

SCALE
- Echelle -
0 1 km.

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PARTIAL CARRYING OFF OF A SUPPORT POINT INSUFFICIENTLY MODERNIZED

Attack to the LINH DONG Post

on January 13, 1954

This post is located at the border line between the HAIPHONG and NORTH areas (at 57-25). It is in the paddy fields and consists of one central block and three peripheral enceintes of masonry, recently built, surrounded by barbed wire networks and dominated by the KINH CHU calcareous massiveness.

Its garrison comprises 32 men:

- 1 European 1st Lieutenant
- 1 European Sargeant
- 1 African Sargeant
- 2 African First Sargeants
- 27 African soldiers.

The post is under the jurisdiction of HIEP SON THUONG, and is commanded by a Captain whose P.C. is located at HIEP SO THUONG, about 3 kms to the East-South East.

Nearby are the posts of KINH CHU and KINH CHU Quarry, at about 800 meters from LINH DONG, to the W-NW. They are light posts manned with natives and pioneers.

THE ENEMY

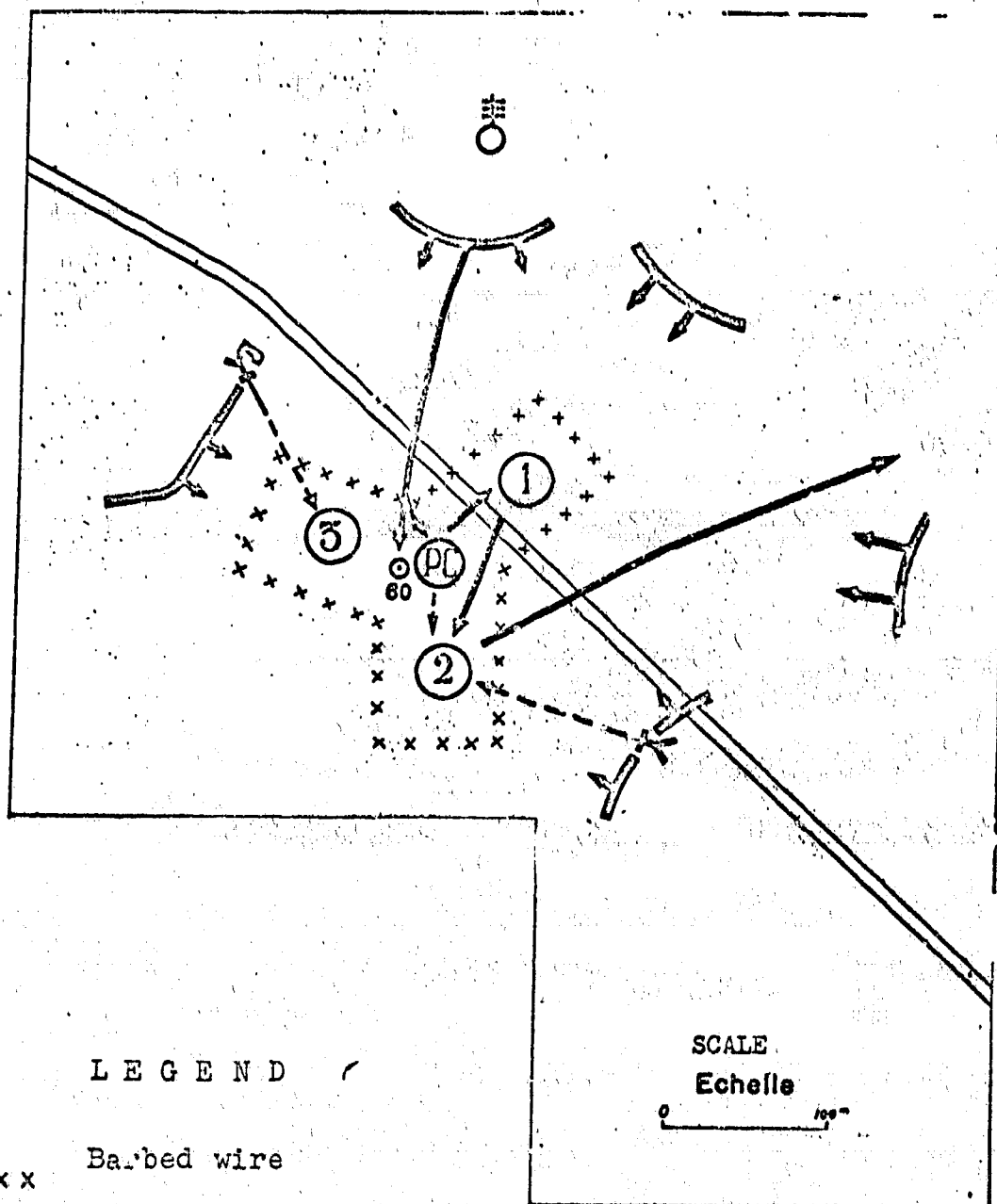
The enemy strength put in action to attack simultaneously the three posts of LINH DONG, KINH CHU and the Quarry, were the equivalent to one March Battalion, i.e.:

- 1 General Staff
- 2 Companies of a regional battalion
- 1 District Company
- Heavy weapons elements from the Regional Battalion (2 81 mortars, 2 machine guns, 2 S.K.Z.)
- 3 DU KICH Sections
- 1 engineer assault detachment, apparently of about 40 men, half of which constituted a protection group armed with machine gun pistols and the other half an assault specialist group, having at its disposal Chinese explosives: little wooden boxes capable to be introduced into the loopholes with the aid of a bamboo pole.

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ATTACK TO THE LINH DONG POST (detail)



LEGEND

- xxx Barbed wire
- V.M. Fire
- V.M. Movements

SCALE
Echelle

0 100m

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These elements were articulated in three groups; the P.C. was at the center of the disposition of the posts to be attacked:

- One group contained one company of the regional battalion less one section, but was reinforced with two DU KICH Sections, having the mission to attack or at least immobilize the KINH CHU and the Quarry Posts.
- A second group contained the other company of the regional battalion, one engineer assault Section and two S.K.Z., being charged to conduct the attack to post LINH DONG.
- A third group contained the district company and one section of the regional battalion, heavy weapons elements of the regional battalion (mortars and machine guns), and had the mission to assure the protection of the attack formation by establishing blockings on all the access roads to the three posts.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATTACK

The watch was provided at LINH DONG by four watchers: one at the central block and one each at three peripheric enceintes; the first one on the ground, the other three on the blocks. No "sonnettes" were used.

Toward 04:10, the watchman of Block III, hearing a noise behind him sounded the alert.

The V.M. formation had then been able to take position in silence, even penetrating within the post. The barbed wires had been jumped over without cutting out a gap; after the attack the network was found intact.

To be noted, in this respect, that the terrain, although paddy fields, was very irregular: absolute leveling could not be effected. So, access pathways remained through which, by crawling, men could advance, chiefly at the dead angles of the blocks.

After the alarm was sounded, the men took their combat positions. But the enemy was already within the post, near the blocks; the central block and the mortar pit annexed to it were attacked with explosives slid in.

- The Post Commander who was at the mortar pit was subdued by several Viets and made prisoner.
- The central block and the mortar pit were blown up, although causing only a wounded man among the garrison; the latter, commanded by the European sergeant, sallied out firing falling back on block II. An African soldier was made prisoner.

Blocks I, II, and III fire on the central block while the Viets urge in loud voice and in French the Lieut. Commander to give the order to surrender. The head of the Post does not answer.

The European Sergeant, having arrived at block II, ordered an agent to go to the P.C. of Headquarters to request artillery. This liaison agent sneaked away without even the Sergeant noticing it.

At the P.C. of Headquarters, the Company Commander having no radio connection with LINH DONG, got in touch with KINH CHU and was informed that the main attack is against him, that in LINH DONG there was only harrassment. In fact, the Quarry Post had already been taken by the V.M. and the enemy had reached the barbed wire at KINH CHU. Artillery intervened to support KINH CHU and not LINH DONG.

In the meantime, bloc III had been hit by a S.K.Z. and had partially crumbled. The occupants recover the arms and remain near the block. Three men out of seven are wounded.

At about 05:00, the V.M. assault Block I and bring the prisoners in front of same (among them the 1st Lieutenant) and urge the garrison of the block to surrender. The African sargeant continues to have his men firing (six men in all) trying not to hit the prisoners.

The summons of the Viets are made in French, in Arabic and in Bambara without any accent. (This latter fact in accordance with the statement of one of our African soldiers).

The Viets then turn toward Block III, from where the European Sargeant had just left for the Headquarters P.C. to request reinforcements. The Block is hit by a S.K.Z. but it continues firing. But, using the African prisoner they hold, they succeed in starting a discussion with the block garrison (8 occupants under the orders of an African first sargeant). The discussion continues... finally, the first sargeant comes out with his men behind him; only two are made prisoners with him, since the others succeed in disappearing or in escaping after a short capture.

It is already high morning. The Viets withdraw, one section toward HIEP SON THUONG (in which is included the European sargeant which left the post during combat) and advancing toward LINH DONG.

BALANCE OF LOSSES

A. Friendly

1 French Officer) missing
4 Africans)
5 Africans wounded

B. Rebels

As per information gathered, losses were considerable.

FACTS FIND OUT BY THE INVESTIGATION

- The immediate approaches to the post were not absolutely leveled, thus leaving open facilities of slow infiltration even up to the heart of the post.
- The loopholes, widely open, were not obstructed by armor plates as it is customary in concrete fortifications; they were then open to the introduction of charges placed by hand.

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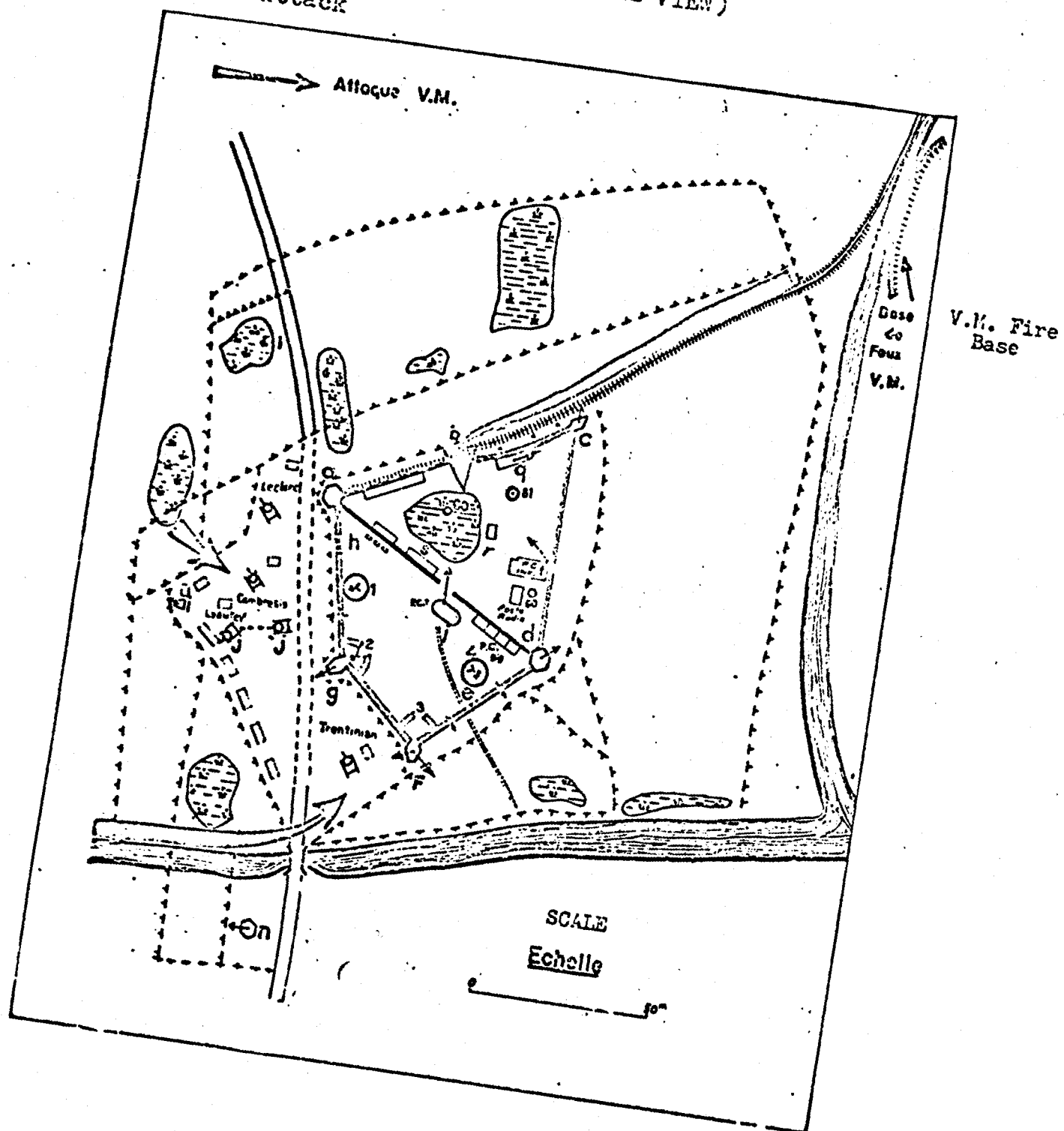
- The immediate approaches to the Blocks were not interdicted by obstacles preventing the assailants to get near enough to slide charges into the loopholes (obstacles at 5 meters, at least).
- After the disappearance of the Chief, at the first moments of the attack, no defense maneuver is attempted by the defenders: in fact, there was a group of men at the central block charged precisely of counter-attacking within the post (the group fell back onto Black II, which proves that in spite of the presence of the Viets one could move within the post).
- The European sargeant who sent a liaison agent (who departed immediately) to HIEP SON THUONG, never verified such departure and even ignored it when he himself left the post leaving as commander of the block, an African corporal who soon was to stop the combat, lacking the support of any superior.
- It was not then a post defending itself, but three isolated blocks, each one fighting on its own.
- An African sargeant answers with bullets to the propaganda speeches made by the Viets, in spite of the fact of seeing through his loophole that the Viets have his Officer at gun point. A corporal in command surrenders and surrenders his block.

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ATTACK TO THE LE KHU POST
(OVERALL VIEW)

V.M. attack



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CARRYING OFF OF A LARGE POST

NOT MODERNIZED

CAPTURE OF POST LE KHU

On Sept. 14, 1953

The support point of LE KHU situated on Road No. 39, houses a Headquarters P.C. which depends on the HUNG YEN Sub-Sector. It is basically a triangular old type post, 80 meters each side, with angle blocks on the flanks (a,c,d), built with bricks around a stone building serving as P.C.

Block b, designed to reinforce the east side, crumbled and is useless. A lookout with searchlight is installed on block c, another was built near the infantry P.C.

At the center of the post there is a large pond crossed by a causeway. The billets are straw-huts or shacks built against the enceinte walls, which have loopholes for individual firing.

On the NW glacis a position battery is juxtaposed to the Post; a slope 1 meter high surrounds it on three sides, the fourth side consists of a party wall with a large porthole.

The Battery has four pits, two of them of concrete (2 and 3) for flank firing. A concrete central fire station has been built near the party wall.

The post has access only through an entrance h, located at the NE; by night it is locked by a double barrier of chevaux de frise. A wooden shack against the party wall constitutes the P.C. of the battery and serves also as billet.

The north glacis, crossed by Road No. 39, is occupied by a tank platoon, assigned there a few weeks ago to reinforce the P.A. At the flanks of the glacis are two blockhaus (m and n).

A Native Detachment encamps before the tanks, close to the barbed wire network. A number of straw-huts built on this glacis obstruct the flat view.

The immediate approaches to the P.A. have the aspect of an elevated village space, cleared but badly leveled, with small ponds and banks. The wire network, not wide or strong, does not follow the contour of the terrain, nor the fire plan. Covered by grass, the network does not constitute an obstacle to infiltration. Only the position battery has been recently reinforced with a dense barbed wire network extended along the slope.

Dead angles abound: on the approaches of block m, along the slope of the old road side east of the Post, and along the NS steamer.

The successive garrisons have planted mine fields, but no description

1

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of them exist for record, and de-grassing operations are limited because of dangerous.

Two spotlights exist: one on top of lookout c, served by the infantry in charge of surveilling the NE and SE approaches; the other over block f, served by the artillery in charge of surveilling the NW and SW approaches.

P.A. GARRISON

a. Infantry :

Under Vietnamese 1st Lieutenant X....., Commander of Headquarters and Chief of the Post:

3 Sections of the 2nd Company of the 10th B.V.N. (86 men)
1 Native Section of the 578th Company (3 noncoms - 13 men)

b. Artillery :

Under Vietnamese 1st Lieutenant Y..... :

The 2nd Battery of the III G.A.V.N. 970 men) which relieved the 3rd Battery transferred to LUC DIEN.

This 2nd Battery has been reorganized during the last few weeks, put to Group base, as the result of the attack it suffered at VAN TRI on August 16. One of the four pieces has remained at the base for concordant fire. An Officer of the 3rd Battery remained too, to transmit the orders.

c. Armor

Under French 1st Lieutenant Z..... :

The 2nd platoon of the 3rd Squad of the colonial armored Regiment Far East (3 Sherman tanks and 1 half-track).

DISTRIBUTION OF MISSIONS

The 1st Lieutenant Commanding the Infantry station and Headquarters is the Head of Defense.

The Infantry company protects the armor and the artillery and defenses the ES of the Post; each has assigned a combat emplacement. It does not exist any mobile reserve, except the P.C. automatic rifle team and the personnel not in service. Individual riflemen fire from inside the huts.

The Battery defends the West side of the Post with 105 mm and automatic weapons.

The armor platoon defends the Battery and the North side.

The Native Section protects the armor platoon.

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SECURITY AND ALERT MEASURES

The Chief of the Post was alerted by the Sub-Sector Commander on the security measures to be taken, particularly after the fall of the VAN TRI Battery, in August. The following alerting telegram was addressed to the HUNG YEN Sector on September 12, by the 2nd D.M.T.:

"Concentration of V.M. Regiment in the region and verified indications enable to predict imminent action of the 42 against TIEN LU, PHU CU and THANH MIEN Posts. Prepare for defense."

Apparently, no special reinforcement measures were taken or recommended at LE KHU after such warning; on the evening of the 13 the security disposition was substantially the same as in the previous days.

However, on the 13 September at 17:00, an alerting exercise perfected the close defense missions; armor did not participate.

Between 20:00 and 02:00, three patrols successively searched and surveilled the surroundings.

Around 20:30, the first patrol had a contact 500 meters east of the Post; the incident was reported to the Post Chief and for about one hour everything was on the alert. Toward 22:00, the Post Chief ordered preparatory firing of a few shells as harassment, six of which were flares but they did not function; then, toward midnight, the Battery Commander goes with the Post Chief for a last round inside the post.

The last patrol (Corporal X.....) comes back toward 02:00, without incident. The post seems slumbering in quietness. It is a very dark night (new moon period), a light haze limits visibility to a few meters.

The watch disposition is organized as follows:

- 8 infantry sentries (a,b,c, lookout, d,l,m,n)
- 4 artillery sentries (e,f,g,h)
- 2 armor sentries (one fixed at "LYAUTEY", the other mobile)
- 1 infantry noncom on watch (r)
- An infantry internal round service (at the infantry P.C.)
- 1 artillery noncom on watch (near the P.C.T.) and 1 noncom on internal round.
- 1 noncom on watch at the armor (j).

The personnel not on watch is billeted near the combat positions or within the blocks; the tank teams are in tents near their vehicles or next to them.

The Officers were placed as follows:

- The 1st Lieutenant Chief of the Post, at the infantry P.C.
- The 1st Lieutenant Chief of the Tank Platoon, at the artillery P.C.
- First Lieut Y....., Battery Commander, and 1st Lieutenant Z....., liaison officer, at the artillery P.S.
- First Lieut. N....., fire plan officer, and 1st Lt. M....., head of Section, at the P.C.T.

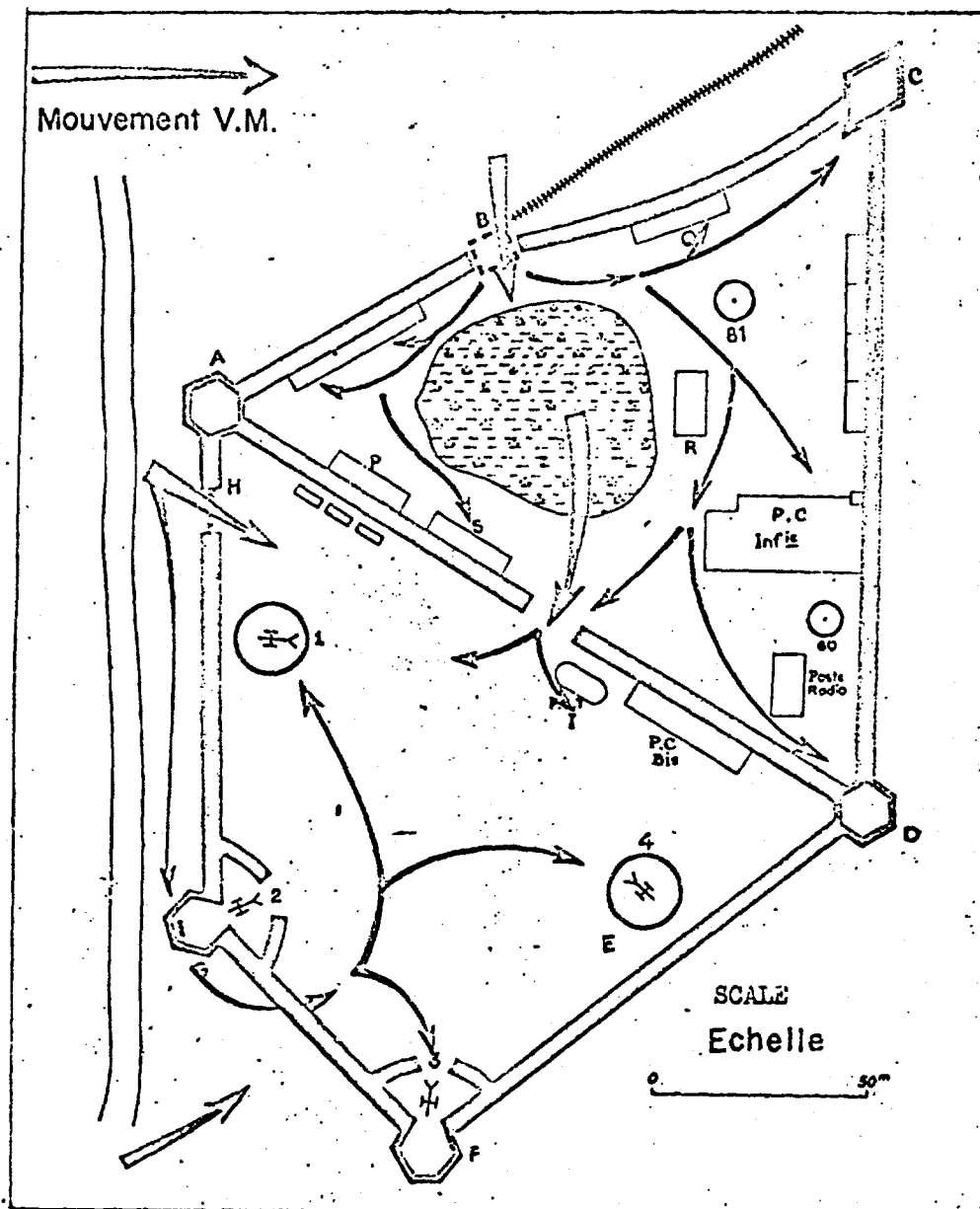
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ATTACK TO POST LE KHU

(detail)

V.M. Movement



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Since the beginning of the month, without the knowledge of the Sub-Sector Commander, several women live at the post billeting with their husbands: at block a, at block b, near blocks m and n; the wife of adjutant P..... and her child live in a straw-hut near the infantry P.C.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATTACK

Around 03:15, the garrison is suddenly awakened by the explosion of mortar shells, on a neutralization fire which signals the beginning of the attack. In the thick darkness no sentry had detected the positioning of the V.M. attack formation, which is massed facing the N and E sides of the P.A.

The assault detachments irrupt simultaneously in three points through breaches opened on the last barbed wire internal network. The third detachment which used a pathway on a dead angle of an old causeway, went over the enceinte wall of block b. Then goes around the pond and subdues the riflemen of blocks a, c, d, after a confusing hand to hand fights in the courtyard; also subdued the the men at the infantry P.C. and at the billets where the riflemen are taken by the back and neutralized with hand grenades. The systematic subduing of the last resistance points takes about half an hour.

The NE detachment, which opened a passage facing the "CAMBRESIS" half track, scattered through the disposition of tanks-native section, neutralized the tanks, took hold of block m, and dispersed the natives.

The NW detachment, which advanced along the banks of the stream, took by assault block n and attacked the tanks and the natives from the back, in cooperation with detachment NE.

The Battery, since the beginning of the attack, was put in state of defense facing SW as planned and got ready to absorb a frontal attack; the firing personnel attended the guns and the close defense personnel took up the machine guns and the automatic rifles.

About half an hour after the beginning of the attack to the P.A., a converging attack of V.M. commandos is launched against the Battery.

- An attack element massed near the door on the party wall rushed toward the P.C. and the P.C.T.
- A second column forced the north entrance; momentarily blocked by the 12.7 machine gun of the P.C.T., it sneaked along the slope, jumped over to the position, and takes the defender from the back.

After a short hand to hand fight all organized resistance ceased.

DEFENSE OF THE INFANTRY POST

The personnel of the infantry station, surprised by the suddenness of the attack, took up the defense on the spot. First Lt. X....., who was wounded at the head in coming out of the P.C., attempted in vain to coordinate the resistance; already the V.M. was breaking through the block b breach, widened with S.K.Z. fire, and was menacing the P.C.

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Without reserves available, 1st Lieut. X..... withdrew toward the battery after all automatic rifle loaders are gone, and taking the 12.7 machine gun installed on the roof of the P.C.T. swept the interior court of his station. After a few minutes of firing, toward 03:55, he was killed by a volley of automatic rifle at the stomach. He was relived by 1st Lt. Y....., commander of the 105 battery.

- at block a, private N..... was firing a 30 machine gun against the road axis; he was wounded by an explosive charge thrown into the embrasure; later he was taken prisoner by the V.M. but a few days later he escaped.
 - the automatic rifle team located at straw-hut q, had the mission to defend the enceinte wall at the block b level, and jumped at its combat station at the first moment of the attack; Corporal M.... was killed; private N.... barely escaped, throwing himself and his weapon into the bond outside.
 - at block c, private P...., server of the 6.6 machine gun, realizing that the assailants had occupied the courtyard, left his post and hid at the pond.
 - at block d, the sentry was killed; the automatic rifle team was neutralized with hand grenades by a V.M. group coming from the courtyard: rifleman O..... was killed, Corporal S.... and loader T.... were captured.
 - the 81 and 60 teams at the pond were dispersed: gunner U... escaped.
 - at the Company P.C., adjutant L...., assistant to the Post Chief, was killed while he was trying to organize the defense; Sergeant T....., went to the 60 behind the P.C., fired several mortar shells and escaped jumping out the enceinte wall near block d.
 - at the Radio station (A.N.G.R.C. 9) T....., the operator on duty, is joined by Sergeant D..... who informed (at 03:15) the Sub-Sector that LE KHU was being attacked, that the protection fire from CHO NOI, heavily harrassed, will no be able to be effected by the Battery which was busy on its own close defense.
- A scrambling station, not identified, hindered considerably the communication. Toward 04:05 the roof of the radio station crumbled. Sergeant D....., after having informed on the situation, escaped just at the moment the V.M. reach the building and took refuge until day break at the barbed wire network, south of the Post.
- Shortly after 04:00, the infantry station was entirely neutralized, but the V.M. commandos had assaulted the Battery position.

DEFENSE OF THE NORTH GLACIS

a. By the peripheric fortifications:

- At block m, the sentry was captured at the beginning of the attack; Sergeant H....., Chief of the block, who was sleeping at a nearby straw-hut with his wife, was seriously wounded while going

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to his station and was abandoned by the V.M.; Corporal D....., automatic rifle shooter, was wounded at his station by a V.M. group which irrupted into the block, killing one of the men and wounding another.

- at block n, covering the bridge, sentry T.....was killed; Sargeant H....., Chief of the block was wounded and left as dead on the terrain; Corporal Q....., billeted in a near by straw-hut with his wife, is killed while going to his combat station.

b. By the native Section :

- The Sargeant on watch at the moment of the attack, was informed by the sentries that the dogs were barking, unusually, at the village of DANG CAO (1 km east of LE KHU). It was about 03:00. Apparently, he charged the sentries with the watch and went to report to 1st Lt. X.....
- The native Section was enveloped and offered only a brief resistance; sentry l, watching the east entrance, was killed; Sargeant N... was made prisoner; the Chief of the Section, S....., escaped with several armed men toward the pond near the barbed wire.

c. By the armor :

- Alerted by the first explosions, the teams rushed to their tanks.
- The "LYAUTEY" sentry puts his machine gun immediately in action; the team joined him; private G..... was wounded before arriving to the tank. To get away from a fire started by a mortar at a tent, the engine of the tank was started, and the tank was backing when the V.M. men surrounded it; the crew locked itself within the tank and fired point blank with the cannon and machine gun.

The V.M. explode some charges (on the front-right ledge and on the machine gun). The crew, forced to get out was captured. (Private G..... will escape a few days later).

- The half-track "CAMBRESIS" was engulfed by the attack which emerged near by; the tank caught fire and the crew was immediately neutralized.
- The crew of the "LECLERC" (Sargeant R.....) could not get to its tank which was neutralized by a violent barrage of automatic arm fire. The crew escapes capture by dispersing around the ponds by the barbed wire.
- The crew of the "TRENTINIAN" jumped to its posts. First Sargeant M.. put out a starting fire in his tank caused by a mortar shot and then joins his crew. First Corporal B..... is wounded.

The weapons aboard the tank are put into action toward NW, but the crew could fire only 2 shots and a volley of machine gun; V.M. groups soon surrounded the tank, which is defended with hand grenades. The crew locked itself inside the tank; a hand grenade was thrown in through its turret.

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The V.M. tried three times to blast it by means of charges placed at the turret, under the differential and under the engine; the crew is forced to come out; the driver is seriously wounded and cannot leave his seat - he was found later burned to death. First Sergeant M..... mortally wounded rolls into a ditch and was left as dead. The V.M. captured the pilot, his assistant and the loader; they were forced to dismount their 50 machine gun.

- 1st Lt. X....., Chief of Platoon, who billeted at the artillery P.C., tried in vain to get to his tanks.

Automatic weapon fire forced him to go back and take refuge at the P.C.T. where he will be captured a few moments later, after having tried to stop a group of V.M. Three of his men, located within the Battery enclosure, are killed near him not far from the P.C.T.

DEFENSE OF THE BATTERY POSITION

At the beginning of the alert a close defense fire (8 time fire shots) was executed a priori by the 4th gun against the SW glacis; the other guns with their fire field obstructed by the tanks did not intervene.

One tried to establish telephone communication with the infantry P.C. but only the Radio Service answers from the central station announcing that CHO NOI, under attack, requests protection fire.

- Lt. X...., Battery Commander, tried to contact his Group Commander at HUNG YEN by radio, but the transmission is scrambled and he can be heard only intermitently.
- Alerted around 03:50 that the V.M. were invading the battery position, he hands the microphone to 1st Lt. Y.... and rushes to the 12.7 machine gun installed on the roof of the P.C.T. where 1st Lt. Z... will be killed a few minutes later. Lt. X.... relieves him and fires alternatively toward the North entrance and toward the courtyard of the infantry station; later on, closely menaced by the attack, he withdraws toward the barbed wire south of the position where he remains until the V.M. are gone.
- 1st Lt. Y.... replaces 1st Lt. X... at the 608 Radio station to alert the P.C. of the III/G.A.V.N.; in spite of his first bullet wound, he tries to establish the connection but he does not succeed because of the scrambling. Seriously wounded for the second time, he takes cover in a culvert where he was recovered at day break.
- 1st Lt. H..... who remained at the P.C.T. managed to escape through a loophole at the moment the V.M. invaded the building.
- 1st Lt. T....., Chief of the 1st Section, withdrew toward the 4th gun when the V.M. entered the position; he escaped taking refuge in the barbed wire.
- Noncom T....., Chief of the 2nd Section, was taken prisoner at his post.

The personnel of the Battery Platoon put up a good defense, but was soon neutralized.

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LOOTING AT THE POST

The V.M. quickly proceeded to searching the approaches of the post where they recuperated some of the personnel that escaped during the combat.

The population of the villages in the region participated in the looting of the Post and was employed in the removal of the V.M. dead and wounded.

It seems that the looting was done in a sort of hurry, since the Battery vehicles remained intact, except a jeep which was taken to the CHO NOI road, with the headlights lit, but it was burned up at the first road cut, 1500 meters from LE KHU.

The artillery Dodge 608, left next to the P.C.T. was not touched.

300 shells 105 were taken, but the balance of the store (400 shells approximately) were left in the magazines; the howitzers were destroyed with explosive charges at the time of the evacuation, around 06:00.

The armament of the blocks was carefully dismounted and part of the ammunition taken.

Two tanks (TRENTINIAN and LYAUTEY) and the half-track were burnt up.

OUTSIDE SUPPORT

The LE KHU Post could have been supported by the 120 mortar Section of the HUNG YEN P.C. of the Sector. This Section intervened only twice because of the uncertainty existing in regards to the situation at LE KHU, the transmissions of which could be only indistinctly heard on three instances on the infantry network:

- At 03:15 to warn about the attack
- at 03:45 to request protection fire on TINH LINH, 1 km to the north
- at 04:05 to report that the radio station building had been hit by a mortar shell.

The 608 Battery station, heard intermitently, reported to P.C. of the HUNG YEN III/G.A.V.N. :

- At 03:23 that the Post was being attacked
- at 03:45 that the Battery could not fire facing the glacis north, because of the presence of tanks
- at 03:45 that the Battery was still holding.

After 03:50, no distinct message from the LE KHU Battery could be picked up.

The first 120 shot was fired at 03:45 against TINH LINH (40 shots) and the second was fired at about 05:00, against the Post and its surroundings (60 shots) when the fall of the Post was no more in doubt.

Early morning, a relief column departed from HUNG YEN, reached without difficulty LE KHU, which the V.M. evacuated at dawn.

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FACTS REVEALED BY THE INVESTIGATION

- Through the investigation, no trace of any treason came to light; but it is probable that the attack attained its degree of precision, sureness and suddenness, through the collection of all the necessary intelligence obtained from various sources, particularly through the coolies used a few months before in the construction of the Battery, the Blocks at the northern glacis, and at the weeding out and reinforcement of the barbed wire network.
- It does not appear that the Sector Commander intervened personally on the spot to organize a coherent defense, which the inexperience of the P.A. Chief was to make it depend on improvisation.
- The most vulnerable point was no doubt the East side of the Post: the crumbling of Block b, and the breached wall left without frontal defense; the ineffective flanks of Blocks a and c, which could sweep the attack pathways, constituted a weakness which the assailant ably exploited.
- The armor crews, in spite of the brave obstinacy in desperately using their resources, did not succeed in winning back the lost possibilities, for lack of watches on the tanks which power of instantaneous stopping is not negligible: 2 sentries and a noncom on watch in a 34 men platoon constituted evidently a derisory security in a period of alert.
- The smallest breach was destined to vow this garrison to impotence: without mobile reserve, without mutual support planned in advance, the defense construction crumbled down like a house of cards, in spite of all the heroism and the sacrifice of 22 lives and numerous wounded picked up around the combat stations.